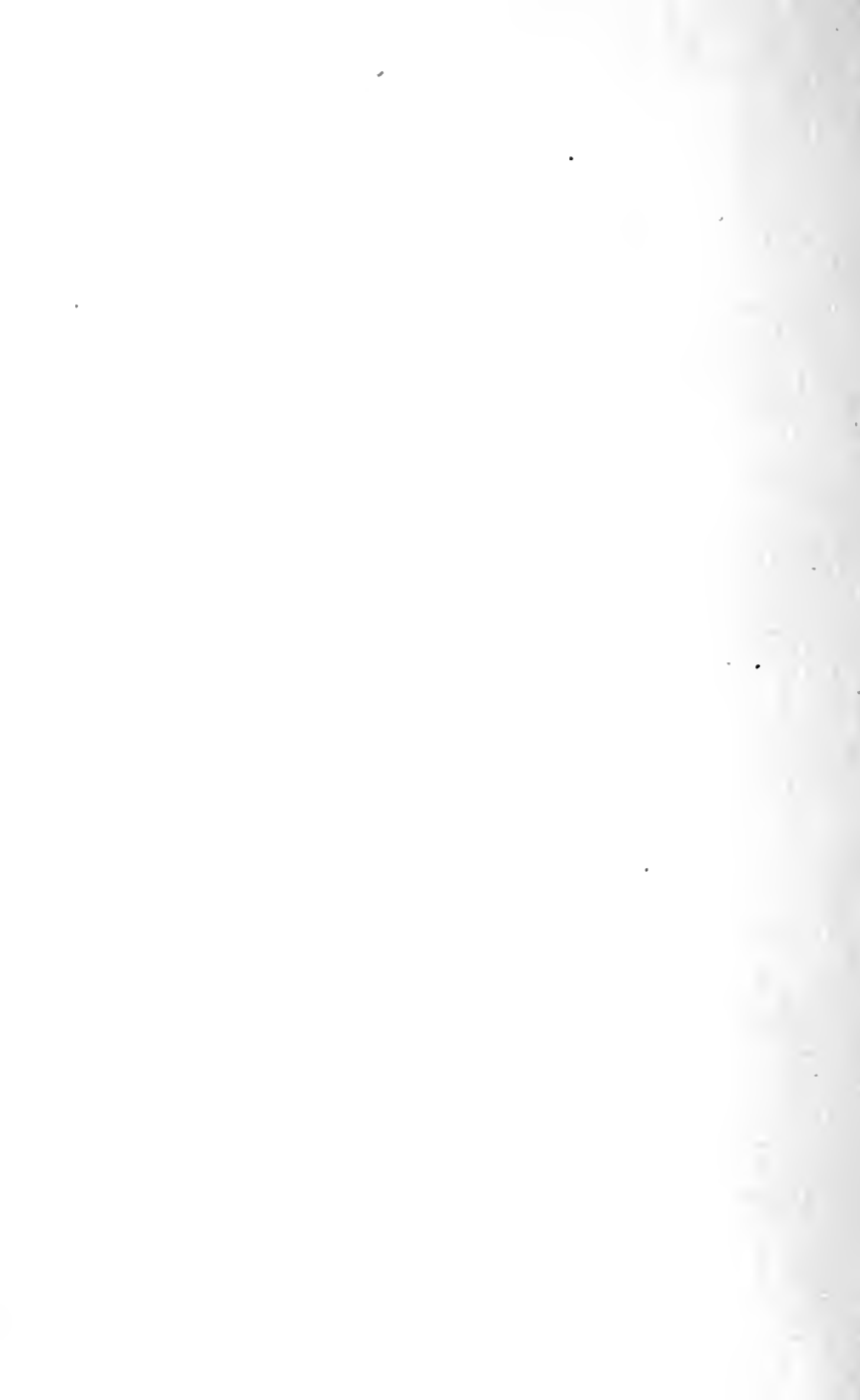


Blue Fly Caravan

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The Blue Fly Caravan

By
Agnes Fisher

Illustrated

Toronto
Thomas Nelson & Sons Limited

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To
My Small Cousins
Shirley and Charlotte

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The Blue Fly Caravan

MY CARAVAN

It must be fun to live in a house
That runs on wheels all the day;
And when you're tired of standing still,
Just put in the horse, and drive over the hill,
Dozens of miles away!

When I'm grown-up I shall buy for my own
A caravan painted blue;
I'll have little curtains all frilly and white,
And a door with a knocker as bright as bright,
And I'll journey the whole day through!

.
But oh! dear me, I've got *years* to wait
Before all my dreams come true.
And I *wish* that the house I live in to-day
Hadn't got roots, but could wander away,
Like a caravan painted blue!

—ENID BLYTON

CHAPTER I

A LONESOME GIRL AT 'TALL TREES'

MARY LOUISE did not like her new home. She was afraid of the dark staircases, and there were three of them, and she was sure that some queer thing would pop out at her, one day, from one of the locked rooms upstairs. More than anything else she disliked the kitchen which Mrs. Grumble never seemed to leave. Of course Mrs. Grumble had a right to be in the kitchen for she was the cook and had been the cook in that kitchen when Mary Louise's father was a little boy. Still Mary Louise could not help thinking that if she could be in the kitchen with her mother, she would get to like it.

She knew exactly what she would do if ever the time came. She would take down the long fork that hung on the wall behind the stove and measure it with herself just to see which were the taller, she or the very, very long fork. She would open the doors of the dark red cupboard that stood in the gloomy passage-way and perhaps, if she felt brave enough, she would lift the papers that covered something, she had no idea what, at the end of the table.

But it did not seem as if Mary Louise were ever to have a chance to be in the kitchen alone. Every time she went to the door to peep in, Mrs. Grumble was either stirring something at the stove, or taking something out of the oven, or mixing something at the table.

It was the same upstairs. Whenever she went up the front staircase, slowly but two steps at a time, she in-

THE BLUE FLY CARAVAN

variably met her Great-Aunt Maria. Mary Louise's Great-Aunt Maria was a very old lady; she was stooped and she walked slowly. Whenever Mary Louise met her at the top of the front staircase she was carrying a feather duster and wearing a frilled gingham dust-cap. Even though it was quite a few years since Mary Louise had read any Mother Goose rhymes, she could not help thinking that Great-Aunt Maria looked like old Mother Goose. If her mother had been there, or her father, or even her big brother Dick, she would have asked one of them if Great-Aunt Maria were a sister of Mother Goose.

But they weren't there. That was the trouble. Dick was at boarding-school and he was not coming to see her in the holidays, and her mother and father were in Switzerland. Mary Louise was alone, that is if one did not count Great-Aunt Maria and Mrs. Grumble, and one could hardly be expected to do that. Sometimes she felt very alone, too, and then her eyes would fill with tears and her lips would quiver. More often than not, however, she felt like a girl in a story-book, who was having an adventure.

Adventure or not, though, Mary Louise did wish she had someone with whom to share it, someone who would steal along the upstairs corridor with her and rap on each of the locked doors. And someone who would go with her down to the little yellow house at the end of the garden! Once or twice she had ventured to ask Mrs. Grumble about the house but all Mrs. Grumble would say was, "You best stay away from there, Mary Louise. That house is no place for a young one".

So far as Mary Louise could make out the house she was in was no place for a young one either. There was no one to tell her stories. There were no books she could read.

THE BLUE FLY CARAVAN

Whenever she tried to talk to Great-Aunt Maria, her aunt nearly always shook her head and said, "Speak louder, child, speak louder." Once or twice she had made an effort to enter into conversation with Mrs. Grumble, but Mrs. Grumble nearly always gave her a couple of cookies and "shooed" her outside.

Mary Louise had been at 'Tall Trees' a week when she decided that she could not stay any longer. She couldn't. She wouldn't. Her mother and father would not expect her to, if they knew she had nothing to do but dig in the garden or chase the chickens, or stroke the sad faces of the cows as they stood at the bars in the pasture field.

No, she could not stay at 'Tall Trees' for three months and perhaps, for six months. No one to talk to; no one to play with; no one with whom to go hurrying down the garden path to the yellow house, even if Mrs. Grumble said you shouldn't. No one with whom to have secrets; no one with whom to pretend. And Mary Louise did love to pretend. But try as she liked she could not pretend that she was not a lonesome little girl who dearly wished her mother and father were not in Switzerland.

It was because she could not pretend that she decided to send for her mother. She knew how quite well, for she had heard her father say to Great-Aunt Maria, "Now if you need us or want to hear from us quickly just cable." So Mary Louise decided to cable. She knew that cables could be sent from the office at the railway station, for on the day they had come to 'Tall Trees' her father had sent a cable to Switzerland.

Mary Louise felt like a girl in an adventure story when she rushed down the cinder driveway after lunch, and

THE BLUE FLY CARAVAN

hurried out on to the road that led to the village and the station. She was frightened too, for, although she knew that Great-Aunt Maria and Mrs. Grumble napped after lunch, she was afraid they might—just might—see her running down the hill.

It was a breathless, perspiring Mary Louise that dashed up to the wicket at the station. She was so out of breath that she choked when she tried to speak to the station-master. At last, when the words did tumble from her lips the station-master shook his head and said, "I never heard so many words at once before. Sit down here on this chair and rest until you can separate them."

That made Mary Louise laugh and what with laughing and having a drink of cold water and wiping the perspiration from her forehead, she was soon ready to speak distinctly. She spoke loudly, too, in case the station-master's ears were no better than Great-Aunt Maria's.

"I wish to cable to my daddy. He's in Switzerland. I have the name of the city on this piece of paper."

"Well, well, upon my word, it's Jack Graham's young one. Mary Louise, you are, and you want to send a cablegram to your daddy." The station-master took the pencil from behind his ear and sat down on a chair opposite Mary Louise.

"How do you know my daddy's name?" Mary Louise asked, forgetting for the moment that she had come to send a cablegram.

"Bless you, child, I knew your daddy when he was no bigger than you are. He used to sit in that chair you're sitting in now and ask me to send telegrams for him." The station-master chuckled to himself as he added, "Pon my word, history does repeat itself."

A LONESOME GIRL AT 'TALL TREES'

The mention of telegrams brought Mary Louise back to her purpose. She looked out of the window thoughtfully for a few minutes and then back at the station-master who was rummaging about in a drawer of his desk. What should she say? She did not want her mother and father to think she was ill, or to think Great-Aunt Maria was unkind to her.

"Here's the cablegram pad, at last," the station-master said. "'You tell me what you want to say and I'll write it for you. That, probably, would be best as I expect you've not had much experience with cablegrams. I haven't had myself, but surely between us we can manage a pretty good one.'"

The station-master held his pencil ready for Mary Louise's words.

She began, "Say, we'll say, first, 'Dear daddy' and then say—"

"We'll write at the top of the cable, 'Mr. John Graham, Hotel Anglais, Interlaken'." The station-master read the address from Mary Louise's crumpled paper.

She nodded approval and started again, "Dear daddy, how are you? Do you like being in Switzerland? Are there many little girls—. No, that won't do. Please won't you help me?" This last to the station-master.

"Of course, I'll help you. You come over here and watch me while I write." The station-master motioned to Mary Louise. "But first you tell me what it is you want to tell him; you tell me just as if you were writing a letter."

"Well, then," Mary Louise burst out, "It is that I'm lonesome. I hate 'Tall Trees'. I'm not going to stay there." She stamped her foot to show that she meant it

THE BLUE FLY CARAVAN

and then added, "Please, please, please won't mother come home on the next ship?"

By the time Mary Louise had said all this her eyes were filled with tears and her lips were quivering.

"Now, now," the station-master warned, "no tears here. Sit here on my knee and we'll have a bit of discussion about the business of this cablegram."

Mary Louise was not at all sure that she wanted to sit on the station-master's knee, but before she could turn back to her chair he lifted her up, even though she was a big girl for her nine years.

"You're lonesome, that's the trouble. First, then, we'll write 'Lonesome'. You're not going to stay at 'Tall Trees'. Next we'll write 'running away from 'Tall Trees'. Now what next?"

"Please don't write that about running away," Mary Louise begged. "It would alarm them. Write instead, 'unhappy and please can't mother come home'."

"All right then—'unhappy, mother come next ship'. Now we'll read it. 'Lonesome, unhappy, mother come next ship'. How does that suit you?"

Mary Louise puckered her forehead into a row of heavy wrinkles. She looked at the words. She puckered her forehead a little more, if that were possible, and then she said, "Read it very slowly, will you, please?"

The station-master read very slowly, "Lonesome—unhappy—mother come next ship."

"I don't like it," Mary Louise said. "I don't like it at all but still it's what I wanted to say."

"Now isn't that a hard blow for my composition," the station-master murmured. "Perhaps it would help us

A LONESOME GIRL AT 'TALL TREES'

both if we went back to the yard for awhile. Shall we see what the shade of trees and a swing can do for us?"

"No," Mary Louise hung back, "because my mother might miss a ship."

"Never fear, young lady," the station-master promised, "I'll tend to that. You come out to the yard."

Before Mary Louise could say another word the station-master was leading her through the door at the back of his office and into a kitchen. From the kitchen he took her out to a shady yard, but before she could see a swing she was arrested by the sound of voices.

"Here, you fellows," the station-master called, "I have brought a new member for your club and, if I don't miss my guess, a real caravaner."

CHAPTER II

THE CARAVAN

As a rule Mary Louise was very friendly, but her week of having no one to talk to but Great-Aunt Maria and Mrs. Grumble made her shy when three young people came rushing over the lawn to meet her. But even though she was so shy that she could not think of a word to say when the station-master began to introduce them, she could tell quite well that they were not "slow coaches"; they could do stunts, plan adventures and without doubt, pretend almost anything. Perhaps they would pretend they were in Switzerland, Mary Louise thought. The idea of pretending she was in Switzerland came to her while the station-master was introducing the girl of the group and it was such a happy thought that Mary Louise could not help smiling her sunniest smile.

"This is Jean," the station-master said, taking her hand and putting it into that of Mary Louise. "She is my grand-daughter, and even if I do say it myself, she's not a bad sort at all."

"And this is Alec," he continued. "He is my grandson and he wants to go around the world on the biggest ship that was ever made. He's beginning his travels now in a caravan."

Travelling in a caravan! Mary Louise was shy no longer.

"Oh, tell me about it. I'd love to travel in a caravan," she burst out eagerly.

THE CARAVAN

"Not so fast, young lady, not so fast," the station-master warned. "You haven't met the master of the caravan yet."

Mary Louise found herself feeling very shy when the station-master led her up to a tall boy who was almost as big as her brother Dick. He did not look as friendly as the other two. She could not help thinking that likely he did not want to be bothered with girls.

"Now, Mary Louise, this is the master of the caravan, my grandson, too. His name is William John Simmonds but we call him Captain Jack. He's not nearly as dour as he looks just now."

Without another word the station-master turned on his heel and walked away. He had introduced his grandchildren to Mary Louise, but he left her to introduce herself. For a moment she was inclined to run after him, but she looked at the friendly faces of Alec and Jean and decided to stay.

"Are you the girl who has come to stay at 'Tall Trees'?" Jean asked.

"Yes, but how did you know? I didn't think anyone in the world knew I was there," Mary Louise said in surprise.

"O, we knew all right. Nearly every day we've talked about going to visit you, but Jean's afraid of the Grumble. She is, that's a fact." This explanation came from Alec.

"Hush, Alec. I'm not any more afraid than you are. It was you she chased, not me, and anyway we shouldn't talk about her in front of Mary Louise."

Jean's admonition had little effect on her young brother, for he began at once to tell Mary Louise about his first and only visit to 'Tall Trees'.

THE BLUE FLY CARAVAN

"It was last summer," he told her, "and grandmother sent me to ask Miss Graham for a pail of buttermilk. I couldn't open the gate so I climbed over it and just when I got over it there was the Grumble standing right in front of me and she looked so cross and angry that I didn't know what to say, so I said, 'Gee, you've just got one tooth haven't you?' And she chased me for saying that."

Mary Louise could not help laughing at the idea of Alec being chased by Mrs. Grumble. It was funny, too, to think of his exclaiming to her, "Gee, you've just got one tooth," for Mary Louise had nearly done that herself, the first time she came to 'Tall Trees'. Indeed, she would have, had her mother not hurried her out of the kitchen before she had finished the sentence. With this recollection of her first day at 'Tall Trees' came the memory of her mother's last warning to her on the day she had gone away, "Mary Louise, you must never say a word to Mrs. Grumble about her one tooth. Never, no matter how much you want to."

The recollection of that admonition made Mary Louise remember why she had come to the station. She had come to send a cablegram but, before she could excuse herself and go into the station to see about the cable, Jean had her by the hand and was leading her over the lawn.

"We'll show you the caravan," she was saying. "It's painted blue, and we're going to put a big blue bow on old Barbara's tail when we hitch her to it, and we're all three of us going to have blue overalls and, if grandmother gets them finished in time, we're going to have blue curtains on the caravan window."

"But where are you going in the caravan?" Mary Louise asked. "Is that it? Why, it's ever so big, and is that white horse Barbara?"



"But where are you going in the caravan?"

THE BLUE FLY CARAVAN

Mary Louise started to run toward the caravan the moment she saw it in the field and the other three came after her as fast as they could. Even Captain Jack ran, although he looked much too serious and really too important to run after a group of small children.

Jean mounted the steps of the caravan and stood looking down at Mary Louise.

"I am the mistress of the Caravan Blue Fly," she proclaimed, "and I invite you, Mary Louise Graham, to be my guest on our first journey over the hills to a far, far country."

"You can't ask her like that," Captain Jack said, "without telling her a thing about where we're going or why or when, or anything."

"Of course I can, Jack, and then afterward, when she says she wants to go, we'll tell her all about it."

"Are you really, really going to a far, far country?" There was eagerness and wonderment in Mary Louise's voice.

"Indeed, we are. It's a fact," Alec announced emphatically.

"Please tell me more about it," Mary Louise begged, "and tell me, too, why you call it the Caravan Blue Fly."

As she spoke Mary Louise mounted the steps of the caravan and from the doorway she could see inside. There was a driver's seat at the opposite end, and along one wall there was a low bench. The floor of the caravan was covered with a bright red carpet and shining kitchen utensils hung along one white side. There were little shelves too, each with slats along the bottom, and a long cupboard with padlocked door. It was a real caravan!

"Do you really think it sounds queer?" Jean asked

THE CARAVAN

anxiously. "It isn't though, for grandfather says that years ago station buses used to be called flies. They were called that because they had to go so fast, to meet trains and anyway we want to be fliers, so there."

"And it's blue," Alec added defensively.

Mary Louise nodded her head. She was not as interested in the name of the caravan as she was in the caravan itself. She had read of caravans but she had never seen one before. And now she was in one and she had been asked to be a caravan guest. She could not have been more surprised if a dark-eyed gypsy had popped out of the cupboard.

"But whose caravan is it?" she asked Jean, "And how long can you have it and where did you get it?"

Captain Jack and Alec were now at the door, Alec eager to answer Mary Louise's questions, and Captain Jack to put a stop to them.

"Miss Mary Louise Graham," Captain Jack spoke in a loud voice, "I don't think you'd qualify as a caravaner, so I don't think we could take you with us on our journey."

"Jack, you're the rudest boy I ever knew," Jean cried out. "Maybe she wouldn't qualify to-day but I can teach her. Please remember, Captain Jack Simmonds, I'm the mistress of the caravan. You said so yourself."

Poor Mary Louise was beginning to feel lonesome and unhappy again. Captain Jack's cold voice and disdainful look made her feel painfully uncomfortable. However, she managed to say, "Perhaps I don't want to be a caravaner anyway."

"Of course you do and we want you to be," Alec assured her. "Don't you pay any attention to old Jack. He's just grouching because grandad said we couldn't get away to-day."

THE CARAVAN

"When are you going?" Mary Louise asked.

"We shall take our departure at dawn on Thursday morning," Jean said, "and by that time, if you are really quick to learn, you will be a fully qualified caravaner."

"You'll have to know how to build a stove out of stones and you'll have to—oh, I say!" Alec's voice died away in a smothered exclamation and Alec himself suddenly disappeared over the seat of the caravan.

And no wonder, for a very wrathful figure stood in the doorway. It was Mrs. Grumble. Her face was red; little wisps of hair were hanging about her ears and there were great dabs of flour on her arms and on the front of her dark apron. Mary Louise, Jean, and Captain Jack stared at her, speechless, and Mrs. Grumble stared back at them.

One minute, two minutes, three. It seemed hours before anyone said a word, but at last Captain Jack recovered himself sufficiently to say, "Good afternoon, Mrs. Grumble."

Mrs. Grumble glared at him and instead of returning his greeting she walked into the caravan and took Mary Louise by the hand. There was nothing for Mary Louise to do but go with Mrs. Grumble. She tried to shape a farewell to Jean and Captain Jack but the words stuck painfully in her throat. However, she succeeded in giving them a wan smile as Mrs. Grumble led her to the door, and when they smiled back, startled though she was, she felt a warm glow of friendship for them.

Mrs. Grumble did not believe in wasting words on children. She had brought up twelve of her own and she often boasted that they understood a look from her better than a word. She wasted no words on Mary Louise now, as she hurried her away from the caravan and up the hill that led to 'Tall Trees'.

CHAPTER III

JEAN AND JACK MAKE A RESOLUTION

CAPTAIN JACK and Jean and Alec sat on the steps of the Blue Fly Caravan talking very seriously. At least Alec was talking seriously and Jean was thinking. It was hard to tell just what Captain Jack was doing for he had little to say but his face had a worried, rather angry look.

"I tell you," Alec said vehemently, "that Mrs. Grumble is a dragon and I for one am not going to be frightened by any dragon."

Captain Jack was witheringly scornful as he reminded his young brother that it was he, Alec, who at a first glimpse of Mrs. Grumble had jumped over the caravan seat.

"And you hid under the caravan," he concluded, "and didn't dare come out until you saw her going away."

Alec, generally so quick with retorts, was silenced by the disdainful chuckle in Captain Jack's voice. Although he hardly admitted it to himself he was a little ashamed of the hurried exit he had made at the appearance of Mrs. Grumble.

So the three sat on the caravan steps, thinking. Captain Jack tried to think that he was glad Mary Louise had been taken away. Jean knew very well that she was sorry and Alec knew nothing but anger toward Mrs. Grumble.

"After all," Jack was the first to break the silence, "I don't think we need to feel so badly. The youngster's never had any experience caravanning and she'd likely cry

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every night. And I for one don't want to have my journey spoiled by a cry-baby kid that's afraid of the dark and trees and whip-poor-wills." With that Captain Jack ascended the steps of the caravan and began rummaging about in the tool-chest for a hammer.

Jack's apparent indifference to Mary Louise's enforced departure made Jean more anxious than ever to have her go with them. When Jack came down the steps with hammer and nails ready to put the letters of the name 'Blue Fly' on the side of the caravan, she was prepared to tell him what she thought.

"Jack Simmonds, there are times when I think you're just too mean for words. I'd want Mary Louise to go with us even if she were going to be a nuisance every minute of the day. How'd you like it to live up there in that great house with an old, old, old woman that's deaf and another one that's as cranky as a witch? How'd you like it, I say?" By the time Jean finished speaking her hand was gripping her brother's arm and her flushed, angry face was close to his.

"Oh, forget it. Help me get these letters straight."

But Jean would not allow herself to be calmed so easily.

"I'm going up to 'Tall Trees' now, you just see if I don't, and I'm not going to let the dragon send me home before I see Miss Graham." Without saying anything more or waiting to give Jack a chance to reply, Jean dashed across the field toward the station-house. She was nearly to the hedge that separated the station yard from the field before she realized that Alec was running with her.

"I'll go with you, Jean. I'll go with you," he shouted. "The old dragon can't send us both home without us seeing Miss Graham."

JEAN AND JACK MAKE A RESOLUTION

The Simmonds family, or rather the two younger members of the family, had something of a reputation for acting on first impulses. And it is more than likely that they would have found themselves in serious difficulties had they been able to carry out their decision to see Miss Graham at once. It was their grandfather who, after questioning them about their hurry, succeeded in persuading them to wait until their anger toward Mrs. Grumble had cooled.

"Come and sit here in the shade with me," he invited. "We'll discuss the matter and then, perhaps, after we've all had tea, you may go up to 'Tall Trees', although I shouldn't be surprised if you might decide to send an envoy."

Before Alec could ask what an envoy was, Grandmother Simmonds came to call them to tea. In the frantic scamper to be first at the wash-basin and first at the table, Alec forgot all about envoys, and perhaps too, he forgot about Mary Louise!

Poor Mary Louise! She was much in need of an envoy to intercede on her behalf with Great-Aunt Maria and Mrs. Grumble. At the very moment when the three Simmonds were taking their places at the tea-table, Mary Louise was sitting on the floor of 'Tall Trees' biggest, darkest pantry. She was not crying. She was not having to try to keep from crying. She was not looking about for a way to crawl out of the dark room. She was doing nothing but sitting on the floor.

Indeed, if one could believe it, she felt better sitting on the floor of the dark, musty pantry than she had sitting on one of the black, slippery chairs in the drawing-room. It was so dark in the pantry that she could see nothing, but in

THE BLUE FLY CARAVAN

the drawing-room all she had been able to see was Great-Aunt Maria's stern face. It was so quiet in the pantry that Mary Louise could easily imagine that she was locked in a dungeon, but even that was better than hearing Mrs. Grumble say over and over again, "And there she was, Miss Maria, the naughty runaway, having the time of her life with those Simmonds young ones in their caravan."

Perhaps it would be exaggerating to say that Mary Louise was glad to be in the biggest, darkest pantry of 'Tall Trees' but she knew she preferred to be there rather than to tell Great-Aunt Maria she was sorry that she had run away. She was not sorry. Even though she thought that she would never see them again, she was glad, ever so glad that she had seen Jean and Alec and the big, wonderful blue caravan.

Were they really going on a journey to a far, far country? Or was it a "pretend" journey such as she and her mother often took in their "pretend" aeroplane? Suppose it was a real journey over the hills, with old Barbara hitched to the caravan, would they have taken her with them? Would they?

Mary Louise asked herself that question over and over again—would they? What fun it would have been to go jogging up hills and down hills in a caravan! Sometimes Captain Jack, even if he did not seem to like her very well, might have let her sit on the springy seat with him. Perhaps he might, once in a while, have let her drive old Barbara. It would have been just like being a real gypsy.

But now she was locked up in the dark pantry and no doubt, Jean and Jack and Alec would be well on their journey before she was allowed out. Great-Aunt Maria was an old, old woman and old, old women forget so many

JEAN AND JACK MAKE A RESOLUTION

things. Great-Aunt Maria might forget all about her being in the dark pantry. She might, and never remember her at all until her father and mother came back from Switzerland and said, "Where's Mary Louise? Why didn't Mary Louise come to the station to meet us?" Great-Aunt Maria would forget her; she knew she would and Mrs. Grumble was so cross that she would never remember her. Never!

Alec had said Mrs. Grumble was a dragon. Mary Louise had read a story about a dragon that had just one eye, a piercing, cruel, green eye. Mrs. Grumble had two eyes, and they were probably green, and she had just one tooth. Mrs. Grumble was a dragon with two green eyes and one tooth. The thought made Mary Louise shudder, and brought her to her feet to beat in desperation on the door of the biggest, darkest pantry of 'Tall Trees'.

She beat with her fists; she kicked; she shouted. But neither kicking, beating, nor shouting brought anyone to her rescue and at last, there was nothing she could do but sit down on the floor again and wait. Perhaps, after all, they would not forget her. Perhaps—not.

CHAPTER IV

THE BIGGEST, DARKEST PANTRY

IF Mary Louise, sitting wearily on the floor of the biggest, darkest pantry of 'Tall Trees' could have heard her Great-Aunt Maria and Mrs. Grumble talking she would have known there was little likelihood of her being forgotten. But Mary Louise, sitting in the pantry, could hear nothing. No wonder, then, that she curled herself up and went sound asleep.

Miss Maria Graham had lived all her life at 'Tall Trees'. She loved the great old house, with its heavy green shutters and its long narrow verandahs. The terraced lawn, with its dark purple honeysuckle plants and its high cedar hedge, was one of her dearest treasures. Miss Maria did not quite understand why a child could not be happy at 'Tall Trees' but even though she could not understand, she knew that it was, nevertheless, true.

Mary Louise's father had lived at 'Tall Trees' when he was a little boy and no one knew better than Miss Maria that he had not always been happy. And now Mary Louise was at 'Tall Trees' and she was not happy.

Miss Maria sighed as she poured herself a cup of tea. After she had taken a first sip she looked over at Mrs. Grumble who was sitting at the other side of the tea-table.

"You found the child with the Simmonds children, Elizabeth?" she questioned Mrs. Grumble.

"Yes, Miss Maria, having a picnic she seemed to be, with

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never a thought of having run away or of you being alarmed." Mrs. Grumble's voice was severe even in speaking to Miss Maria.

"No, of course not. How could she know, poor child, that I would be worried? Did you put her to bed, Elizabeth?"

"Indeed, and I did not put her to bed. I locked her in the pantry, the big, dark pantry, and as I did it, I thought to myself, 'Well, young lady, in you go and many's the time I've locked your father in here before you'."

Miss Maria put her cup down hurriedly, and felt down at the side of her chair for her cane. "In the dark pantry, Elizabeth!" she exclaimed. "That is much too cruel. I must let her out."

"Do her good, I'd say," Mrs. Grumble said taking a generous bite from a tea biscuit. "But if you are bent on spoiling her and teaching her nothing, I'll let her out."

Mrs. Grumble rose from her chair and hurried from the room. As she reached the door, Miss Maria called out, "Bring the child here, Elizabeth. I want to talk to her."

Mary Louise's blue gingham dress was sadly crumpled as she stumbled from the dark pantry into the sunshine of the sitting-room. Mary Louise herself, was hardly awake and as she caught a glimpse of Mrs. Grumble's shrunken mouth and heard her voice, she could not help thinking that a fairy-tale dragon had seized her. She was certain of it when Mrs. Grumble took her by the shoulders and shook her, whispering at the same time, "Straighten your hair and wake up, for your aunt wants to see you."

Mary Louise's hair was not very tidy and her eyes were still blinking because of the brightness of the sun when Mrs. Grumble led her into the dining-room. She did not

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have time to wonder what Great-Aunt Maria was going to say, however, for Mrs. Grumble, as usual was ready with words.

"Here's the youngster, Miss Maria," she said, "and a sorry looking creature she is, if you ask me, with her hair topsy-turvy and her dress as wrinkled as a duster."

Mrs. Grumble's words made Mary Louise angry. She forgot about her being a dragon with green eyes and one tooth. She forgot that her aunt was going to punish her. She only knew that she did not like Mrs. Grumble. Her hair topsy-turvy, her dress all crumpled up indeed! What else could they be?

Mary Louise shook Mrs. Grumble's hand from her shoulder and no sooner had she done that than she doubled her fists and struck out to hit Mrs. Grumble. As she did so she shouted, "Old dragon, old dragon with green eyes and only one—" and then she stopped.

"Oh, you would, would you, you impudent little—" And then Mrs. Grumble stopped, and the two stood staring at each other, the very little girl and the very big old woman.

It was Miss Maria that put an end to the battle. She said in a very quiet voice, "Mary Louise, I want you to sit here and Elizabeth, I would like some hot water for the tea-pot."

Mary Louise could not help being ashamed as she sat down on a low chair near her aunt, but she could not help hoping that Mrs. Grumble was ashamed, too.

As the door closed after Mrs. Grumble, Miss Maria said in a gentle but stern voice, "Mary Louise, I am ashamed of you for speaking to Mrs. Grumble like that."

Mary Louise wanted to say that she hoped she was ashamed of Mrs. Grumble, too, but she could not say a

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word. She just sat on her chair and stared down at the toes of her shoes.

"When Mrs. Grumble comes back I want you to tell her you are sorry."

Mary Louise continued to stare at her shoes.

"Do you hear me, Mary Louise?"

It was certainly being a very difficult day for Mary Louise. First Great-Aunt Maria had wanted her to say that she was sorry she had run away, and now she wanted her to say that she was sorry she had tried to hit Mrs. Grumble.

And she wasn't. She was not sorry. And there was one thing Mary Louise would not do—she would not say she was sorry when she was not.

This explains why she did not have her tea in the dining-room with Great-Aunt Maria, but had it instead, from a tray in the big bedroom that was hers, at 'Tall Trees'. It explains, too, why, after she had drunk her milk and eaten the last morsel of sponge cake, there was nothing for her to do but get undressed and crawl into bed, even though the sun was still shining.

Perhaps it explains why Mrs. Grumble hurried with washing up the tea things and in getting out the milk pails for Ephraim. Ephraim was 'Tall Trees' one hired man, and Mrs. Grumble usually kept him waiting for the milk pails, and while he waited she usually told him what a stupid man he was, and what a lazy man he was, and how careless Miss Maria was with her money to keep him on at 'Tall Trees'. But this night, Ephraim, much to his surprise, had his pails handed to him the moment he entered the kitchen, and himself hustled out, with but a word of greeting and no word of scolding.

It was no wonder Mrs. Grumble was in a hurry.

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Miss Maria had told her that she was to go to the village *at once* and ask Mr. Simmonds if he would, please, come to 'Tall Trees' that evening. When Miss Maria said *at once*, Mrs. Grumble knew she meant *at once*, and when she sent for Mr. Simmonds Mrs. Grumble knew that there was something very important to be decided. Perhaps it was about the child; Mrs. Grumble could not help wondering, and her curiosity sent her down to the village in great haste.

CHAPTER V

EAVESDROPPING

MARY LOUISE'S bedroom at 'Tall Trees' was a very big room. The first time she had seen it, she thought that it was the biggest, whitest room she had ever seen. The walls were white; the chair was white; the bureau was white; the bed was white, and so were the curtains at the windows.

The room was wide, and it was made wider by a great bow window, and it was long, and it was so high that Mary Louise sometimes thought that the ceiling must be nearly up to the sky. It was so high that when the first dusk came at evening, the ceiling grew dark almost at once, and then Mary Louise could not help imagining that ever so many funny little fairies came trooping out from the dark corners.

When she was at home she liked to pretend that little fairies, some of them mischievous and some of them as good as could be, lived in the drawers of a high cupboard in her room, and that when she was all snuggled into her bed, they came out to play with her. But she did not like the fairies that lived in the ceiling corners of her room at 'Tall Trees'. They seemed always to be laughing at her and never giving her a chance to laugh with them.

That was why Mary Louise could not stay in bed after she had had her tea on the evening of the day she had run away. The fairies frightened her; not only did they laugh at her, but they scolded her, too. She was certain that she could see them nodding their heads and pointing their

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fingers at her and hear them saying "Naughty Mary Louise, naughty, naughty."

At last she could stand them no longer. She threw back the covers and jumped from her bed, almost trembling with fear. How she hated fairies! Hated, hated, hated them! If it had not been for them she could have lain in bed quite comfortably and pretended all kinds of things—pretended, perhaps, that she was in Switzerland with her mother and father, or pretended she was riding up hills and down hills in a caravan painted blue.

The dark hall at 'Tall Trees' was really more fearsome than the high ceilings, and Mary Louise ran through it so fast that the fairies might have been chasing her. She did not dare to go all the way down it, past the locked rooms, but instead she went hurrying down the first long staircase, two steps at a time. She had hurried so much there was nothing for her to do but pause to rest at the bottom of the steps.

It was as she was sitting on the bottom step to get her breath and trying to think what she could say to Great-Aunt Maria that she heard voices. Now Mary Louise knew that she should not listen; she knew it very well but what else could she do when she heard her own name mentioned?

Then she heard it again and this time the voice said, "Mary Louise is lonesome. It is to be expected, of course, with no children to play with, but I hardly know what to do about it."

Then another voice replied, "Yes, poor youngster. She came to me to-day to send a cable to her daddy. That is why she ran away, you know."

Mr. Simmonds, the station-master, was at 'Tall Trees'! At 'Tall Trees' and talking to Great-Aunt Maria! Things

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were getting worse and worse. Mary Louise almost burst into tears. She, probably, would have, had she not heard the next words: "I think, Miss Maria, you'd better let her go caravanning with my grandchildren. They're good youngsters, you know, and they quite took to each other, to-day."

Mary Louise rose and stood close to the door. What would Great-Aunt Maria say to that? Mary Louise listened for all she was worth; her heart was beating faster than it did when she rushed down the hill to the village. Would Great-Aunt Maria never speak?

Mary Louise wanted to go dashing into the room shouting, "Let me, please, please, please, let me," but she was wise enough not to do it.

At last Great-Aunt Maria spoke. "I should not like to let her do that unless I first consulted my nephew. They might think, Jack and his wife, that I was taking the first opportunity of getting rid of her."

"Hardly, Miss Maria. They would never have left Mary Louise in your care had they thought that of you," this from Mr. Simmonds.

There was another long silence.

Mary Louise, standing close to the door, had to clench her fists hard, bite her lips, and say "I must not, I must not" to herself, over and over again, in order not to open the door and go into the room and beg Aunt Maria to say "Yes, Mary Louise may be a caravaner."

"The youngsters will not be ready to start until the day after to-morrow," Mr. Simmonds broke the silence at last. "So how would it be if we sent a cablegram to your nephew? We could have a reply by to-morrow night."

Again Mary Louise had to wait and wait and wait, but

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when she heard her aunt's words she went dancing up the stairs to the biggest, whitest bedroom she had ever seen, happier, she thought, than she had ever been in her life before. For Great-Aunt Maria had said "I'll take your advice, Mr. Simmonds. You send a cable to my nephew to-night. Dear, dear me, I don't know, indeed I don't, what I'd do if I didn't have such good friends as you and your wife to help me."

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For the first time since she had come to 'Tall Trees' the ceiling corner fairies laughed with her instead of at her. Even before she had time to tell them "I'm going to be a caravaner," they were saying to her, "You're going on a journey in a caravan painted blue. You are; you are. You're going over hills and you're going to camp just like gypsies do. You are; you are."

CHAPTER VI

MRS. GRUMBLE IS FRIENDLY

THE early morning sun came streaming into Mary Louise's bedroom. It tipped the white bureau and white bed with streaks of bright gold. The robins in the maple trees were singing joyously. The soft June breeze fluttered the starched white curtains. Mary Louise opened her eyes, then sat up sleepily, but before she could curl up for another little sleep she remembered—that perhaps—perhaps—she was to be a caravaner. She was wide awake and quicker than it takes to tell it, she was out of bed and over to the window.

The sky was softly blue with not one dark cloud to mar it. The distant mass of trees that so often had frightened Mary Louise, did not make her feel lonesome or afraid this morning. Ephraim, with milk pails on his arms, was sauntering down the path to the cow stable. Quite suddenly as Mary Louise looked after him, she liked Ephraim, even though his face was the colour of her mother's brown club bag, and even though, when he laughed, the sound was like the chugging of a motor-car. Yes, she liked Ephraim. Indeed, as Mary Louise stood at the window thinking about being a caravaner, she liked 'Tall Trees' very much and everyone at 'Tall Trees', even Mrs. Grumble.

As a rule it took Mary Louise a long time to dress. Buttons wouldn't button; garters wouldn't fasten; shoes wouldn't go on. But this morning the buttons seemed to be

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waiting for their button-holes; shoes went on like magic, and even the tangles in Mary Louise's curly hair slipped out without too much painful pulling. On most mornings it was necessary for Mrs. Grumble to come to help her to dress, but this morning Mary Louise was dressed and nearly down the full length of the long corridor before Mrs. Grumble ever thought of "the young one upstairs."

She went down the back stairs that led into the kitchen. Even though she was anxious to see how surprised Mrs. Grumble would be at seeing her up and dressed so early in the morning, she paused before she lifted the latch of the door that opened from the staircase into the kitchen.

Mrs. Grumble was singing. She was. Mary Louise had never heard her sing before. Whatever could have come over 'Tall Trees' in the night? Mrs. Grumble's singing made Mary Louise feel very confident, so she clicked the latch loudly, flung the door back, jumped into the kitchen, and called out "Good morning, Mrs. Grumble. See, I'm up and dressed and washed and you didn't have to do a thing for me."

"Lord help us," Mrs. Grumble exclaimed, "if it's not the young one up already. 'Early to bed and early to rise,' so it seems."

"Yes, and Mrs. Grumble," Mary Louise, although she was happy, could not help being a little uncomfortable, "I'm really sorry I was so rude to you yesterday."

For a moment Mrs. Grumble did not say anything, but finally she said gruffly, "I should think you would be, you pert little piece of impudence, but come along over here to the table and tell me what kind of cookies you like best."

What kind of cookies did she like best? Mary Louise tried to think but the idea of Mrs. Grumble inviting her over

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to the kitchen table and speaking to her in that friendly tone, made her so excited that she was speechless.

"Come, now, child." Mrs. Grumble did not want to delay in her work, "There never was a young one that didn't have favourite cookies. Everyone of my twelve youngsters liked ginger-snaps best and oatmeal next."

The mention of ginger-snaps was enough to make Mary Louise speak. She did not like them and she said so very emphatically.

"But I like oatmeal cookies with dates between, and I like white cookies stuck together with jelly and I like big, big flat tea cakes with crinkly corners and I like chocolate biscuits and I like cookies with cherries and I like—."

But Mrs. Grumble had her hands up to her ears and most amazingly, she was laughing.

"Stop, stop, child," she cried out. "Is there nothing but ginger-snaps that you don't like?"

"Yes, only ginger-snaps, thank you, and I really like the crackly way they break when you bite them but they do burn my tongue." Mrs. Grumble asking her about cookies and laughing, was too much for Mary Louise; she started to go out the door that led to the kitchen garden.

"Come back, Mary Louise," Mrs. Grumble called. "There are a few more things I want to ask you. Sit there on that chair, and," Mrs. Grumble's voice resumed the old stern tone, "don't get up from it until I tell you I'm through."

Mary Louise sat down on the chair.

"Do you like tarts with strawberries in them?" That was Mrs. Grumble's first question after Mary Louise was seated.

Did she like strawberry tarts? Of course she did, loved

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them, but she was so astonished that she could do nothing but nod her head.

"Do you like cake with raisins in it?" Mrs. Grumble's next question brought another nod from Mary Louise.

"And do you like apple jelly?"

Another nod from Mary Louise.

"And do you like lemonade or would you rather have orangeade?"

Mary Louise being truthful could do nothing but murmur, "both, if you please, Mrs. Grumble."

For the second time that morning Mrs. Grumble laughed. Her laugh sounded so friendly that Mary Louise began to think that she might inquire as to why she was being asked all these questions. Before she could do so, however, Mrs. Grumble was speaking again.

"Now I want you to go upstairs and bring me down that crumpled blue dress you had on yesterday and I want you to take off those stockings you have on and bring them down to me, and any other soiled clothes that are in your hamper. Now hurry, and then you can have breakfast with Ephraim and me on the back verandah."

Mary Louise went dashing up the stairs at a great rate. Breakfast with Ephraim and Mrs. Grumble! She had never had an invitation like that before and why, why, had Mrs. Grumble asked her all those questions about cookies and cake and lemonade? And why was she to bring down her soiled clothes in the middle of the week? She knew that the washing had been taken to the yellow cottage on Monday for she had seen Ephraim carrying it down.

Certainly strange things were happening at 'Tall Trees' and Mary Louise could not help thinking that still stranger

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ones were going to happen. As she flew past Great-Aunt Maria's room on her way downstairs, after she had gathered her clothes into a bundle, her aunt opened the door and called her back.

"Mary Louise," she said after she had wished her good-morning, "I want you to come to me in the sitting-room as soon as you've had your breakfast."

"That's about the caravan, of course," Mary Louise said to herself as she went downstairs. "Oh, I hope I'm to go! I hope I'm to go! I hope I'm to go!"

CHAPTER VII

MARY LOUISE TALKS TO EPHRAIM

MARY LOUISE slipped shyly into her chair at the breakfast table. Ephraim was already in his place and eating porridge. He nodded to her, but a great mouthful of porridge and milk prevented him from saying good-morning. Mary Louise began her porridge, but she found it much more interesting to watch Ephraim.

She had never been so close to him before. He was a very, very big man, but as he sat at the table he looked as if he were almost doubled up. His shaggy black head was almost over his plate and every time he took a mouthful of porridge he bent over still more as if to bring his mouth to the spoon instead of the spoon to his mouth. Mary Louise had never seen anyone eat porridge as he did. First he took a spoonful of porridge from his wide-lipped dish and then he dipped the well filled spoon into a cup of milk. The spoon came from the cup dripping with milk and Ephraim drew the porridge and milk into his mouth in a great gusty gulp that sounded, Mary Louise was sure that it did, like the wind blowing down into their fire-place chimney at home.

"So you're turning gypsy, I hear," Ephraim said as he finished his porridge and sat back in his chair to wait for his bacon and eggs.

Mary Louise looked at him in surprise. She noticed that he was smiling at her and that his eyes were black as black could be.

MARY LOUISE TALKS TO EPHRAIM

"Oh, you mean—" Mary Louise began but Mrs. Grumble came through the door at that moment with angry words on her lips.

"Ephraim, can't you keep that mouth of yours shut. I told you not to talk but there you are at it as soon as you get your mouth empty."

Ephraim took his plate of bacon and eggs from Mrs. Grumble and set about eating, without saying a word.

"Now, Mary Louise," Mrs. Grumble said, "get on with your porridge and don't sit there staring at Ephraim. He doesn't know what he's talking about."

"Oh yes, he does, Mrs. Grumble. I bet you he knows I'm going away in a caravan." This put Mrs. Grumble into a terrible state of consternation.

"Ephraim Woodcock, 'pon my word, you've no more sense than a six weeks' old baby. You haven't and that's the truth."

Mrs. Grumble was not given a chance to say anything more for Great-Aunt Maria's cane was heard tap-tap-tapping on the kitchen floor, and in a moment Great Aunt-Maria's voice called out, "Elizabeth, Elizabeth!"

As Mrs. Grumble hurried away, Mary Louise leaned over to Ephraim and whispered, "That's what you meant, wasn't it? And I'm going. I'm almost certain I am."

Ephraim looked at her slyly, nodded his head and then put his finger to his mouth. Mary Louise understood that they were to say nothing more for fear of Mrs. Grumble overhearing them. She nodded her head to let him know she understood. Then they smiled at each other, and Mary Louise knew that she had a real friend at 'Tall Trees' in Ephraim.

Mrs. Grumble bounced on to the verandah again, this

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time with a pot of tea and a plate of toast. She poured Ephraim a cup and herself a cup and then began eating ravenously. Mary Louise watched her, more fascinated than she had been by Ephraim's peculiar way of taking porridge, for she had never in her life before seen anyone with just one tooth eat toast.

She was not given long to marvel at Mrs. Grumble's skill, however, for in a few minutes Mrs. Grumble paused in her hasty taking of food, to say, "Mary Louise, Miss Maria is waiting for you in the sitting-room. I told her you had nearly finished your breakfast."

Mary Louise went through the kitchen door very slowly, for suddenly she was afraid of what Great-Aunt Maria might be going to say to her. Perhaps, after all, she was not going to tell her she could go in the caravan, but going to scold her, instead, for having run away and having been rude to Mrs. Grumble. Perhaps, perhaps, oh, so many things, but even though she went ever so slowly, there was nothing she could do but go to the sitting-room.

Great-Aunt Maria was sitting near the window. She had a white cap on her head and she was wearing a dainty mauve dress with white trimmings. She looked so kind and gentle that even though Mary Louise was worried, she could not help thinking that she looked like a lovely, sweet grandmother in a fairy-tale.

"I've come, Aunt Maria," Mary Louise said in a small voice.

"So I see, child. Come over here and sit on this stool at the window."

Mary Louise sat down. Great-Aunt Maria's voice sounded quite friendly; she could not be going to scold her.

MARY LOUISE TALKS TO EPHRAIM

"You've not been happy at 'Tall Trees' Mary Louise," her aunt said, rather sadly Mary Louise thought.

"It's not that I've been unhappy, Aunt Maria," she hastened to explain. "It's only, only, that I'm so lonesome. Oh, Aunt Maria, you'll let me go, won't you? You'll let me go in the caravan, I mean."

Mary Louise had not meant to burst out like that, but she was so anxious to know her fate that she could not keep the question back any longer.

"Go in a caravan, Mary Louise. Why whatever put that notion into your head?" Miss Maria was smiling.

"I heard Mr. Simmonds talking to you last night." Mary Louise made the confession haltingly and fearfully.

"Well, that's why I've sent for you. We expect to have word from your father to-day, and if he says you may go, you will start to-morrow morning."

"Oh, I know he'll say I may. I'm sure he will. Thank you, Aunt Maria, for asking him. I know he'll let me go."

Mary Louise jumped up from her stool and began dancing about joyously. Miss Maria watched for a few minutes, then she called her over to her chair.

"Now, listen, Mary Louise. Your father may say that he'd rather not, and if he does, I don't want you to be terribly disappointed. If he does, we'll just have to think of something else to do so that you'll not be lonesome."

"But he won't. I'm sure he won't, Aunt Maria. How soon will the cable come?"

"Mr. Simmonds says we can't hope to have it before three o'clock this afternoon, but I wanted to tell you that Ephraim is going to bring the caravan up to our garden this morning. It's very shady and quiet there, and he and

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Mrs. Grumble are going to help the Simmonds children pack up for the road."

Dear Aunt Maria! Good Mrs. Grumble! That was why she had asked her about cookies and cake and lemonade.

Mary Louise was a very happy little girl as she went flying out to the verandah to ask Ephraim if she might go with him to bring the caravan. It was so exciting! It was wonderful! And, of course, her father would say she could go! Of course he would!

CHAPTER VIII

MAKING PREPARATIONS

THE Blue Fly Caravan with old Barbara hitched in its shafts came up the hill that led from the village to 'Tall Trees'. Captain Jack was driving; Ephraim was sitting on the seat beside him and Jean and Mary Louise were inside peeping out from the windows. Alec was standing in the doorway, swaying back and forth as the caravan jostled up the stony road.

"It's just as if we'd started on our journey, isn't it?" Jean asked gleefully.

Mary Louise was a little doubtful, for as the time for the cablegram drew near, she grew anxious.

"When will it be three o'clock?" she called up to Ephraim.

"Not for four hours," he answered, and Mary Louise sighed.

"We've come to our first stopping-place," Alec shouted and jumped down to hold open the gate that led to the 'Tall Trees' driveway.

Old Barbara jogged up the driveway slowly as if she were uncertain of the welcome she was to receive. She need not have been, for she was drawn to a stop in the shade of a maple tree. Her harness was taken from her and she was allowed to roam out into the pasture-field that sloped away to the west of 'Tall Trees'.

Mrs. Grumble came to the kitchen door and looked disdainfully at the caravan. She was quite provoked with

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Miss Maria for having it brought to the door-yard and she was more than provoked that she was having to spend the whole day cooking in a hot kitchen. Not that Mrs. Grumble disliked cooking; she loved it, but she did not like the idea of having that crowd of youngsters running in and out of her clean kitchen.

"When will it be three o'clock?" Mary Louise called out to her when she saw her at the door.

"Not for hours and hours," Mrs. Grumble said gruffly. "I'll tell you when it is. Don't you keep bothering me about it." With that she turned back into the kitchen, first putting the hook on the screen door.

Miss Maria was foolish, she thought, as she went about her work, having the caravan brought up to 'Tall Trees' and putting Ephraim to work examining its shafts, wheels, the wagon supports upon which it was fastened, and its steps. Ephraim would have been better mowing the lawn and chopping wood for the kitchen cook-stove—so Mrs. Grumble thought and she was prepared to tell Miss Maria her opinion.

"More than likely she'll be out there herself," Mrs. Grumble said to herself, "dragging herself, cane and all, up the steps to see the inside".

And sure enough, no sooner had the thought flashed through Mrs. Grumble's mind than she saw Miss Maria crossing the yard to the caravan.

"When will it be three o'clock?" Mary Louise queried her aunt.

"Not so long, not so long, child," Miss Maria tried to reassure her, "but, please, don't be so excited. Hours can't go as fast as minutes, you know."

Miss Maria let Ephraim and Captain Jack help her up

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the steps into the caravan, and Mary Louise and Jean showed her the cupboard, and the table that was fastened to the side of the caravan.

"Now show me where you're going to sleep," she commanded, "and show me your quilts".

Jean proudly pointed to a shelf that was fastened at the end of the caravan, and began to spread out the clean fresh quilts that were piled on it.

"Jack and Alec are going to sleep outside," Jean told her.

When Miss Maria went back to the house she was accompanied by Ephraim. When Mrs. Grumble saw Ephraim walking back to the verandah with Miss Maria she knew quite well what was coming. "Well I'd sooner it was Ephraim than me," she said to herself, "but I'd not be surprised if she told me I was to go, too".

Miss Maria had no intention of asking Mrs. Grumble to join the caravaners, but her plans for Ephraim were just as Mrs. Grumble thought. He was not to ride with them, but he was to go on a bicycle either before or behind them. Ephraim was very pleased with his commission but he was doubtful of how the caravaners would accept him.

"That doesn't matter, Ephraim," Miss Maria said. "I've talked to Mr. Simmonds about it and he agrees that it would be best, especially if Mary Louise goes, for she has never been into the north country in her life and it is more than likely that there'll be times when she will be frightened."

As Ephraim came back from the verandah to the caravan Mary Louise shouted, "Is it three o'clock yet, Ephraim?"

Ephraim laughed and shook his head.

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"Oh, Mary Louise, forget about three o'clock for a few minutes," Alec implored, "and come and let us tell you how to be a successful caravaner".

"I want to know first if I'm going to be one at all." Mary Louise was getting more anxious every minute. She kept herself busy running to the gate to look out for Mr. Simmonds. He was to bring the cable as soon as it came, and Mary Louise was beginning to think that he would never come.

"Well, anyway, listen for a little while, Mary Louise," Captain Jack advised, "for even though you may not be able to be a caravaner now, you may some day".

That was the worst thing Captain Jack could have said, for Jean looked at him scornfully, and Mary Louise, with never a word, slipped away to the kitchen.

"Please, Mrs. Grumble, let me in." Mary Louise rattled the door impatiently and Mrs. Grumble, her face wet with perspiration and dark crimson from the heat of the stove, lifted the latch most ungraciously.

"What do you want here?" she asked. "Why don't you stay out in your caravan?"

But Mary Louise walked past her without replying and through the kitchen up the back stairs. She was making a resolution and she wanted to be alone to think it out. Suppose the cablegram said she could not go! Mary Louise was thinking that she would go anyway. When it was dark she would come down this stairway, slip out of the kitchen and run for all she was worth in the direction the caravan had gone. She might be afraid, but she would do it, she would—if the cablegram said she could not go.

CHAPTER IX

CARAVANER MARYLOO GRAHAM

*Wish I could be Caravaner delighted Maryloo invited.
Have swim for me in Wesalmacoon.*

"It's come. It's come and I'm to go," Mary Louise shouted joyously as she ran across the 'Tall Trees' lawn from the house to the caravan, waving a white and red sheet as she went.

"See! Read it for yourselves," she gasped as Jean and Jack and Alec clustered about her.

"Wish I could be a caravaner," Jack read slowly. "Delighted Maryloo invited," Jean read and added, "I like Maryloo for a name; that's what we'll call you."

"Swim for me in Wesalmacoon," Alec came last, stumbling over the last word.

"I say, Mary Louise," he asked, "how does your daddy know anything about Wesalmacoon and how does he know we're going there?"

"Because, because," and Mary Louise was so excited and so out of breath that she could hardly talk, "because, your grandfather says, my daddy knows all the lakes in the north country, and because, so your grandfather says, no one ever goes north without going to Wesalmacoon."

The word was very difficult for Mary Louise but she said it with a great deal of pride in her voice.

"Well, I should say not," Jack exclaimed. "There are ever so many stories about that old lake. I'll tell them to you, Mary Louise, as we jog along."

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"Say Maryloo, Jack," Jean begged. "Now that we know for sure she's going to be with us she should have a special name."

"Well, Maryloo, then," Jack was a little scornful, "but we've no time for passing around nicknames now. We've to pack and that right quickly."

"Hush," Alec held up his hand in warning. "The grumbling dragon is drawing nigh."

And so she was, coming over the lawn from the kitchen very slowly and with a deep frown on her perspiring face. She probably did not hear Alec's warning but the frown on her face grew to real resentment as she saw them, all four, turn to look at her.

"Come along into the kitchen, a couple of you young ones," she ordered, "and help me pack the stuff I've sweated myself sick making for you."

"Mrs. Grumble," Mary Louise ran up to her and took her hand, "I'm to go, all right. I am, truly. My daddy has said so."

"Yes, so I've heard and more than likely you'll come home drowned. I never let one of my twelve go up to those lakes. Never."

"Oh! Mrs. Grumble! I'll not come home drowned. I just won't." Mary Louise was quite put out by Mrs. Grumble's prophecy but the Simmonds children laughed heartily at the suggestion and trooped after Mrs. Grumble into the hot kitchen.

"Hu, I say, but it's hot in here," Jack exclaimed.

"Hot, do you say, young man? Indeed it is, and I've been here all day cooking, cooking, cooking everything, even myself." As Mrs. Grumble spoke she pointed to the kitchen table.

CARAVANER MARYYLOO GRAHAM

"Oh, Mrs. Grumble, is it for us?" Mary Louise and Jean gasped at once.

"I say, three cheers for—" Alec had to pause in his enthusiasm for he suddenly realized that he must not say "dragon".

"Yes, who else would it be for than for you?" Mrs. Grumble sighed. "So get to work packing."

There were cookies, oatmeal ones filled with dates, white ones with jam between, and tea cakes with frilly corners, to be packed into tin boxes. There were tarts to be wrapped carefully in wax paper and stowed away in pasteboard cartons. There was a big jar of lemon juice to be hidden in a box of straw. There were buns, muffins, and the biggest roll of bacon Mary Louise or any of the caravaners had ever seen. There were eggs and a huge thermos jug of milk, and such an array of cans that one might have thought the caravaners were going to start a grocery store.

"Oh, goody. We'll have lemonade."

"Hurrah, we'll have tarts and cakes and cookies."

"I say, look, everyone, look at the bacon and the cans and cans and cans."

The exclamations were too much for Mrs. Grumble's stern face. She smiled and quite willingly went on with the packing while the children stood about cheering and marvelling at their stores of food.

"Now, carry this, you," Mrs. Grumble said to one.

"Now, this, you, there. Alec, I guess your name is, and you needn't run as if you're on your way to a dog fight."

"Here, mistress of the 'Blue Fly', you'd better carry the eggs over there and see that you don't have them scrambled before you want them."

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So Mrs. Grumble sent them out of the kitchen and she went after them to see that things were packed in safe places. She went for another purpose, too. It was to see the cooking utensils and the dishes.

"Where's your frying-pan?" she asked as soon as she had herself up the steps.

"There," Jean pointed.

"And your saucepans, how many have you?"

The saucepans did not suit her so she grudgingly remarked that she had an old one in the kitchen that they could have.

"Now let me see your knives. Have you a knife for cleaning fish?"

"Yes, yes, yes," they all answered at once. "But how did you know we'd be having fish, Mrs. Grumble?"

"Know you'd be having fish? Indeed, I thought that was the only reason anyone would have for going into that wild country."

"Where are your matches?"

There was a long silence and then in a crestfallen voice Captain Jack had to admit they had no matches.

"I thought so," Mrs. Grumble said with great satisfaction. "Well, I have some for you in the kitchen and they are in a tin box and you see that you keep them in the box." She began to move toward the door.

"Remember what I'm telling you about the matches," Mrs. Grumble turned at the bottom of the steps. "And even if you want that box for a hundred things, like fish-worms and what not, leave the matches there." She started across the lawn.

"Good for the Grumble," Alec said in a loud whisper. "She's not a bad sort after all."

CARAVANER MARYYLOO GRAHAM

"No, she's not. Let's shout 'Three Cheers for Mrs. Grumble'." It was Jack's suggestion and although they all shouted with magnificent gusto, Mrs. Grumble did not turn to thank them. She went into the kitchen and slammed the door after her as if she were angry.

They may have been disappointed at Mrs. Grumble's lack of appreciation of their cheering, but it did not dampen their enthusiasm. Cheers for Miss Maria, Mr. Simmonds and Mary Louise's father in Switzerland followed in quick succession, and with increased vigour. When Ephraim, wheeling a bicycle beside him, came from 'Tall Trees' carriage-shed, he, too, was cheered to the echo.

"Ephraim's to be our out-rider, did you know?" Mary Louise whispered.

"Our out-rider!" the others exclaimed, but they did not wait for an explanation; they added it to their gusty shouts. "Ephraim, our out-rider! Out-rider! Out-rider!"

Thus Ephraim was welcomed to the ranks of the caravaners, and, as he heard their reception, he grinned delightedly.

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At five o'clock the caravan windows were closed and the caravan door was locked. The three Simmonds caravaners went down the hill from 'Tall Trees' to the station-master's house. They went slowly, but not quietly, for they talked eagerly and loudly and every few seconds they turned to wave to the caravaner, Maryloo Graham.

"Be ready at half-past seven," they called each time they turned.

"I'll be ready," the caravaner Maryloo Graham replied as she waved.

CHAPTER X

THE CARAVANERS BEGIN THEIR JOURNEY

AT half-past seven in the evening Mary Louise thought that half-past seven in the morning would never come. She felt certain that she could not sleep, not even close her eyes all through the night. She would be up every few minutes, so she told Great-Aunt Maria, to see if it were daylight and during the time she would be in bed she would be thinking about the caravan and gypsies and swimming in Wesalmacon Lake.

Great-Aunt Maria listened to her protests about going to bed, but nevertheless, Mrs. Grumble appeared at half-past seven to escort her upstairs. Nor was Mrs. Grumble satisfied with a formal good-night. She watched Mary Louise remove her clothes and then she brought in a great tub of water. Mary Louise had had several experiences with that tub before, but on the other occasions she had been left to have her bath by herself. She did not like the idea of having Mrs. Grumble wielding a bath brush and sponge. She let her know her resentment but it had no effect.

"Get in there," Mrs. Grumble said authoritatively. "I'll see that you go away clean, but land alive, you'll likely come home as dirty as a little pig."

Soap in her eyes, water in her ears, brush bristles in her nose, a sponge nearly in her mouth—what a time Mary Louise had! The climax came when Mrs. Grumble swathed her in a bath towel and began rubbing her.

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"Stop, stop," Mary Louise cried out. "You rub me just like you do the kitchen stove when you're cleaning it. Stop! Please, please stop."

When Mary Louise was thoroughly dry and in her pyjamas and in bed, Mrs. Grumble prepared to leave her.

"Now go to sleep," she commanded. "Seven o'clock will be here long before you want it to be."

"Oh, no it won't, I tell you," Mary Louise declared. "But Mrs. Grumble, tell me, please, are there gypsies and Indians and queer people in the north?"

Mrs. Grumble paused with her hand on the door. "Queer," she said derisively, "Well, I should think so. Why else would they be there? Tell me that?"

"Will they, might they steal us, do you think, Mrs. Grumble?" Mary Louise asked further.

"They might," Mrs. Grumble considered, "but what they'd want you for, I can't think."

"Did you ever see Wesalmacoon Lake where I'm to swim for my daddy?" Mary Louise had to shout the question, for Mrs. Grumble was out the door and was closing it.

"Oh, go to sleep," was the only reply she had.

Mary Louise, left alone, began to think of all the things she would have to learn. She knew nothing about being a caravaner. She couldn't make a fire outside; she couldn't drive a horse; she couldn't do anything. But she would learn, indeed she would.

And the next thing she knew the sun was pouring into her room; the robins in the maple tree outside her window were chirping merrily, and Mrs. Grumble was shaking her and saying, "Wake up, sleepy head; it's nearly time for the caravan to start."

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The word "caravan" made Mary Louise wide awake at once. Caravan—it was to-day they were going. It was! It was! And in no time Mary Louise had herself into her blue overalls, and had her blue kit across her shoulders. She was especially proud of her blue kit for Great-Aunt Maria had made it for her and she herself had packed it, with soap, wash-cloth, towel, tooth-brush and comb.

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The caravan, drawn by Barbara, decked out with blue ribbons on her tail and bridle, went out the 'Tall Trees' gate at exactly half-past seven. Captain Jack had the reins; Alec was on the roof; Jean and Mary Louise were in the doorway. Ephraim, the out-rider, had gone ahead on his bicycle. Miss Maria and Mr. Simmonds waved their hands from the front verandah of 'Tall Trees' and Mrs. Grumble stood on the back verandah, neither waving her hand, calling farewell, nor smiling.

"We're off!"

"Away we go!"

"Hurrah for the 'Blue Fly' and the 'Fliers'!"

The last shout was from 'Tall Trees' and if the 'Fliers' were listening they knew that Mrs. Grumble, at the last moment joined in the final farewell.

Old Barbara went down the first hill from 'Tall Trees' very slowly. Indeed, it was not until a few miles from 'Tall Trees', when the road suddenly led into woods, that Barbara showed any intention of going faster than at a slow walking pace. She pricked up her ears and switched her beribboned tail as if in anger, when she entered the long swamp. After she had been in the swamp for a few

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minutes, however, she started on a good trot for the black flies and the mosquitoes were buzzing about her greedily.

"Good for you, Barb, switch some more, a little more and—there, it's off. Now go for them, Barb, beat them with your tail." From his place on the roof Alec shouted encouragement to Barbara, and when her tail ribbon dropped to the ground, he cheered her lustily. Alec had no use for ribbon decorations and he knew, too, that Barbara's tail was her only weapon against the onslaught of mosquitoes.

In the caravan Jean and Mary Louise were talking very seriously, or rather Jean was talking and Mary Louise was listening.

"You see," Jean was saying, "we don't know a great deal about caravanning, not from experience, but we've read about it and our daddy used to live in a caravan every summer when he was a young, young man."

"But why?" Mary Louise asked eagerly. "He wasn't a gypsy, was he?"

"No, silly", he was a lumber culler and he used to go over this very road, stopping every so often to measure and examine lumber."

Mary Louise shook her head to show that she did not know anything about lumber cullers or measurers. Nor was she much interested in them; she was more anxious to know something about caravanning.

"Tell me what he did when he lived in a caravan and is this his caravan?" she asked.

"It is," Jean replied, "his very caravan, only we've painted it up fresh. Now let me see," she continued, "what shall I tell you first?"

"I don't think you'd better tell her anything," Captain

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Jack called back from his seat. "Come along up here, Maryloo, and sit beside me. I'll tell you about caravanning and about this country, too."

Mary Louise looked at Jean, but when she saw Jean's face flushed, she hesitated.

"Maryloo will not go if I don't," Jean called to him, and at once began scrambling into the seat. Her first jump did not take her high enough but the second one landed her, facing backwards, beside Captain Jack. She then held out her hands to Mary Louise and pulled her up beside her. Jean was the first to stand on her knees, and supporting herself by gripping her brother's shoulders, to twist herself around. Mary Louise followed her example.

From his place of vantage Alec could look far ahead, as far ahead as the hills and trees would let him. He decided, therefore, that he should act as guide.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he shouted in a great voice, "we are about to ascend the second highest hill in the township. Not only is it famous for its height but for its crook. This, ladies and gentlemen, is known as the Devil's Elbow."

Mary Louise wanted to ask why, but she did not get a chance for Alec continued his shouting, "Give attention to the view, ladies and gentlemen. Below is the river Moira; to the right is a sugar bush; to the left a-a-a- vacant lot, I guess."

"Hu, you're a great guide, aren't you?" Captain Jack could not help being scornful of Alec for this was only Alec's second trip north and Jack had been over the road at least five times before.

"Where is Wesalmacoon?" Mary Louise asked.

"Wesalmacoon," Jack replied, "is many days' journey

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from here. We'll pass the wigwam of Indian Annie and Eli before we come to it. We'll pass the gypsies' encampment and many saw-mills and timber yards. We'll do well if we draw nigh to the shores of Wesalmacoon before sundown a week hence."

Captain Jack talked slowly and importantly. "Before sundown a week hence" certainly made Mary Louise feel that she was going on a very long journey and for quite a few minutes she asked no more questions.

Old Barbara jogged on. She stumbled, sometimes, as she climbed hills and once or twice as she came down hills, she so nearly tripped that Captain Jack was compelled to give all his attention to Barbara and the reins. But climbing hills or going down them or jogging along slowly on level road, Barbara kept her tail switching, switching, switching. It was her only way of combating mosquitoes and black flies and she did her best to save herself from their ugly bites.

CHAPTER XI

THE FIRST STOP

UP hills and down hills, with Barbara's tail switching, Alec shouting from the roof and Captain Jack giving all his attention to the twisty road and Barbara's stumbling feet—no wonder Jean and Mary Louise grew sleepy and weary of the road.

"Let us stop," Jean kept saying, "Let us stop after the very next hill."

Still Captain Jack did not draw Barbara to a halt.

"Are we going on forever and forever?" Jean asked impatiently, "and never give Barbara a rest and never have any lunch ourselves?"

"You're a great caravaner, aren't you?" Jack scoffed. "We're hardly five miles on the road before you want to stop."

"Hey, there, mistress of the Blue Fly, as you call yourself," Alec shouted, "don't you know that travellers journey in the cool of the day and rest in the heat of the afternoon? You know grandfather told us that."

Nevertheless Jean kept on begging that they stop and very soon Mary Louise, rather shyly at first, added her voice to Jean's.

"That's what we get for taking girls with us," Jack said, as at last he drew the caravan to the side of the road.

It was not on account of the girls that he had stopped, however, but because Ephraim was standing and signalling

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for them to turn out and come to a standstill on a grassy knoll.

"Hello, there's our gallant out-rider," Alec shouted as he scrambled down from the roof; "and how, my valiant warrior, do you find the line of our march? Is the road cleared of enemies?"

Alec read many tales of warriors and buccaneers and he loved to talk as they did. Ephraim, too, must have read many such tales for he was able to answer in much the same manner.

"Aye, aye, my brave master," he said, "the enemies whom we feared have vanished."

"But Ephraim," Mary Louise asked as he came to the side of the caravan to lift her down, "we haven't really got enemies here, have we? How could we have enemies?"

Even though Mary Louise almost whispered her question to Ephraim, Captain Jack and Alec heard it, and together they began to tease her.

"How now, is the gentle little lady frightened?" Jack laughed in none too friendly a manner.

"Fear not, Lady," Alec said. "With my strong arm and my good sword I'll protect you from all the Indians who covet your scalp."

"Oh, Alec, can't you be quiet?" Jean put her arm about Mary Louise's shoulder. "Don't listen to him, Maryloo. He's only a silly. The Indians are sure to be friendly."

While Alec and Jean had been talking, Jack and Ephraim had loosed Barbara from the caravan shafts and had led her to the shade of an elm tree. Instead of returning at once to the caravan they began collecting stones into a little mound. After they had gathered about a dozen Ephraim got down on his knees to arrange them.

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From the caravan Mary Louise watched them. At first she thought they might be getting ready to fight Indians. The thought frightened her but it did not make her ask any questions. Alec was watching them, too, but not so intently that he did not see the fear on Mary Louise's face.

"Lady," he said, coming close to her, "please put your trust in me. Those brave men are gathering stones, not to fight our enemies but to make a stove."

"Make a stove!" Mary Louise exclaimed. "But how can they make a stove with them?"

"Come and see." Alec was about to lead her but Mary Louise was so eager to see a stone stove that she ran.

And sure enough, that was what they were doing. There was a flat rock on the ground and on it they were building up their stove. It was nothing more than a cluster of stones, fitted together closely into a circle. In the centre, on the flat rock, they arranged pieces of wood, mostly twigs from trees, some weeds and one good piece of wood picked up from the side of the road.

"Now then, Alec," Captain Jack commanded, "you go to the caravan for the kettle. It has water in it."

Jean came from the caravan with the kettle before Alec could get there and she brought with her a frying-pan and a parcel of bacon.

"I'm the cook," she said proudly, "so I think I should look after things now."

"Right you are, madam," Ephraim laughed, "and we shall do nought but your bidding."

"Well then," Jean said, "Mary Louise and Alec are to set the table over there on the grass and Jack is to bring wood to keep the fire going and Ephraim is to cut the bacon."

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Contrary to the usual order of things, each person hastened to do Jean's bidding. Jack gathered withered boughs and a few green shrubs and piled them on the fire, being careful, as soon as they were in flames to press them down into the enclosure made by the stones. Ephraim took a knife from his pocket and began slicing the bacon. As fast as he cut it Jean laid it in the pan. The sound of Mary Louise's and Alec's voices came from the caravan. They were having trouble over the selection of dishes.

"We want mugs for tea," Alec said as he reached up to take them from their nails.

"The mugs are for milk," Mary Louise argued. "When we have tea we're to drink from a pail; that's what Ephraim said."

"Oh, he was just trying to tease you 'cause you're a greenhorn," Alec explained, but not very satisfactorily for Mary Louise refused to help him to reach the mugs.

However, at last they found plates and knives and compromised over the mugs by dragging out the thermos jug of milk. They found cookies and bread and muffins, too, and by the time the bacon was sizzling in the pan and the water was boiling in the black kettle, the 'table' (but of course there was no table at all but only a cloth spread on the ground in the shade of an old beech tree) was set.

It was a jolly meal. Ephraim showed them how to make bacon sandwiches and as they ate them he told them about the road ahead. A few miles more and they would come to a camp where there was a saw-mill. Another few miles and they would be at the home of Indian Annie and Eli.

"You'll know we're coming to it long before you get

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there," he said, "for more than likely Eli will be playing his fiddle and Annie will be singing."

"How soon shall we come to their house?" Shall we get there before to-night?" Mary Louise asked.

"Well, that's up to the captain, you know. He's to decide on how many miles we're to go each day." Ephraim looked at Jack who was pouring tea from the pot.

Jack shook his head and then looked thoughtful.

"I doubt it," he said slowly. "It's a good journey from here to Eli's. I think we'll need to make camp by sundown and it's more than likely we'll be no farther than Camden Hill."

"Camden Hill, where's that?" Jean asked. "I never heard of it."

"You'd have heard of it if you'd been over this road as often as I have," Captain Jack replied as if he were a seasoned traveller.

"Tell us about it, won't you, please? Why is it called Camden Hill?" Mary Louise was very eager to know about it, but she had to be content with a promise from Jack that he would tell them about it at night after they had made camp.

"Then let's hurry to get there," Mary Louise said jumping up from her place at the 'table'.

The others followed her but it took awhile for them to be ready for the road again. The lid had to be screwed on to the thermos jug; the teapot had to be emptied; the fire had to be beaten out, and Barbara had to be led back from her shady resting place and hitched between the caravan shafts.

CHAPTER XII

THE STORY OF CAMDEN HILL

THE sun was veering around to the west before the Blue Fly Caravan and its caravaners came to the foot of Camden Hill. Barbara paused at the bottom of the hill and looked back enquiringly at her driver. She pricked up her ears as she heard the trickling of water near by and pawed the stony road with a front foot. "I don't want to go up," she seemed to be saying, "until I have had a drink." Captain Jack understood quite well what she was telling him, but nevertheless he slapped her gently with the reins and made her begin the ascent.

Camden Hill was very twisty; it had first one twist, then another and another, until when you came to the top you were sure to think that the road was going off in another direction. It wasn't, of course, for the road led straight north for many miles. The twists had been made in the road in order to avoid great boulders and for another reason, too, that delighted Barbara and the travellers. The last turn had been made because of a spring. On the top of Camden Hill a silvery spring burst out from between two huge rocks, and trickled away in crystal clearness to the river below. Barbara was the first to spy the water and without waiting for Captain Jack's guiding hand to tell her, she drew the caravan to a stop very close to the stream.

A little more switching of her tail and an impatient

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pawing of the ground and she let Captain Jack know that she would wait no longer for a drink.

"All right, Barbara, old girl, I'll uncheck you at once," Jack said as he jumped down from his seat, "and you shall be the first to drink from the Camden Hill spring."

Jean, Mary Louise and Alec followed. Rather Alec came immediately after Barbara for he had to show Mary Louise how to make a cup of her hands and so drink from it.

It was ever so much fun catching the trickling water in one's hands and for a moment holding back its progress. As soon as the cupped hands were removed the stream burst forth again with a little angry spurt that at first frightened Mary Louise. "That's because we made the water fairy angry," she told Alec, but he was scornful of the idea.

"Who ever heard of water fairies?" he scoffed.

"Why, I have many times. I've read about them and I'm almost certain that if we stayed here for awhile the fairy would come out. She would, I'm sure, if we, every one, you and Jean and Jack and Ephraim, all believed in her." Mary Louise was very serious but Alec would do nothing but laugh at her.

"Maryloo believes in water fairies," he shouted to Jack who was unhitching Barbara. "Did you ever hear anything so crazy?"

"Well, crazy or not, young lad," Captain Jack replied, "you leave the fairy in peace and come over here and help me take Barbara's harness off."

Just then Ephraim broke through the underbrush of the thicket that was to the left of the road. He was carrying an armful of brush and twigs for the supper fire.

"Who is talking about fairies?" he asked.



It was ever so much fun catching the trickling water.

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"Oh, Ephraim," Alec exclaimed, "We didn't know where you were. It's Maryloo that says there's a fairy in the spring. She's a girl, of course, and that's why she believes in fairies."

"Now, is that so? I'm not a girl and still, there's no telling but what I believe in fairies." Ephraim made his way to a cleared spot close to the road and put his armful of firewood down.

The talk about fairies brought Jean from the caravan where she had been busying herself with the supper things. On their way to Camden Hill they had decided to have supper in the caravan and she was getting the food from the cans and cupboard.

"Oh, I say, Ephraim," she called, "Do you believe in fairies really?"

"Maybe so and maybe not," he answered, "but I know that if someone had not believed in fairies and water fairies this hill would never have been called Camden Hill."

At this Mary Louise came running from the spring, and Jean hurried over to Ephraim with another eager question on her lips. Jack was ahead of her, however, with an authoritative command that the story be kept until after supper.

"No, no, Jack. We want to hear it now," Jean pleaded. "We're all tired after our journey and I think we should have a story."

But Jack shook his head and began gathering stones to make a stove.

"The story'll keep," Ephraim consoled Jean and Mary Louise. "It's an old, old story, over a hundred years old, so it would be best to take our time in telling it."

They had to be content with that and, perhaps be-

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cause a story was waiting for them, they worked all the harder. Supper was prepared and eaten in the caravan. Then the dishes were washed at the spring, and after they were put away, beds were made up. Jean and Mary Louise were to sleep in the caravan and Alec, Jack and Ephraim made themselves beds of cedar boughs.

"There's one thing I'd advise you to do," Ephraim said to Captain Jack, "and that's to beat the supper fire down until it smokes but does not go out. It's the only way of letting the mosquitoes and black flies know you don't want them to visit you."

"Good idea, friend Ephraim," Jack approved and he added, "We'll tie Barbara to a tree close at hand so that they'll not give her too much of their society."

"No need," Ephraim replied, "for Barbara, once she's free of a harness and shafts can fight a winning battle with mosquitoes and black flies. Anyway, I imagine Barbara has gone on a journey to a pasture field over the next hill."

Sure enough, Barbara was no longer resting under the trees. She had disappeared so quietly that not one of them had heard her go.

"But I say, Ephraim," Alec was quite alarmed, "It doesn't mean that Barbara has run away, does it?"

"No, of course not. Barbara is a well trained horse and much as she may like to be out in a pasture field she'll be back here long before morning. You see if I'm not right."

Captain Jack and Alec both looked perplexed but they were not allowed to dwell long on the thought of a run-away Barbara, for Mary Louise and Jean were clamouring for the story of the Fairy of Camden Hill.

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"Who is to tell it?" Ephraim asked looking at Captain Jack.

"Why, you, of course," they all exclaimed. "No one else knows it."

"Oh yes, someone else does," Ephraim said. "I think our brave captain has heard it before."

"No, I don't know it, Ephraim. Grandfather has told me the story of how the hill came to be called Camden Hill, but he said nothing about a fairy."

"Well, come along, then," Ephraim said. "We'll sit on the steps of the caravan."

So they arranged themselves, with Ephraim sitting in the doorway and the others on the steps, Mary Louise and Jean together on the step just below Ephraim.

"Listen, listen carefully," Ephraim began.

No one said a word, and for a moment not a bird twittered, not a grasshopper "zipped". Even the trees were still as if they, too, were obeying Ephraim's command.

"What do you hear?" Ephraim asked next.

"Nothing," Alec and Jack replied.

"The spring," Mary Louise and Jean answered.

"The spring, yes," Ephraim said. "Now listen again and perhaps you will hear what it is saying: 'Lirrah, lirrah, chu, lirrah-chu, lirrah-chu.'"

Mary Louise was the first to nod her head to show that she heard it.

"Those are very old Indian words for 'Come hither, come close,' Ephraim said. "It isn't the spring itself, but the fairies who live close to it, who are saying the words."

"Oh, fairies! I don't believe in them," Alec was about to jump up from his seat but Jean put her hand on his shoulder.

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"Never mind whether you believe or not," Ephraim said. "There are others here who do believe, else the fairies would not be talking to-night."

"What do you mean, Ephraim? Do they never say anything except when people who believe in them are near?" It was Mary Louise who asked the question in almost a whisper.

"Never," Ephraim said. "Sometimes they have to keep quiet and never say a word for days and days, even for years."

"The fairies of Camden Hill have lived near the spring for ever so long, no one knows how long," Ephraim went on with the story. "Indeed, no one knows how long it is since they were first seen dancing on the rocks between which the spring runs, but everyone who has travelled this road knows when they were last seen."

"When?" Alec asked breathlessly.

"They were last seen for a certainty a hundred and thirty years ago, on just such a night as this and at just this time. Not only did they dance on the rocks that night, but they came running out to where the road is and stood on the top of this hill. They sang 'Lirrah, lirrah-chu, lirrah-chu,' in clear beautiful voices and a man and a woman who were coming along the trail that was here instead of this road, heard them. First the woman looked at the man; then the man looked at the woman and then they stopped their oxen to listen.

" 'Do you hear the singing?' the woman whispered.

" 'I hear, I can't tell what,' the man whispered back, 'but it sounds as though the fairies were welcoming us to this strange country.'

" 'Fairies!' The woman was very surprised that the

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man, her husband, should say it was fairy music they were hearing, but she believed it was.

" 'Then we've come to the place about which the old Indian woman told us,' she said.

" 'We have,' her husband nodded his head, and hit one ox of the yoke lightly with his whip.

" 'And if it is, if it is the place,' the woman asked, 'shall we stay here and not go any farther?'

" 'But the man was listening again and did not hear her. They listened together and this time the fairies seemed to be saying not 'Lirrah-chu, lirrah-chu,' as the Indian woman said they would but 'Come hither, come hither.'

" 'As they listened they saw light figures dancing on the hill above. They came part way down the hill; they bowed as if welcoming the new-comers; they danced and as they danced they waved their hands and beckoned.

" 'It is the fairies welcoming us to our new home,' the woman said smiling so happily that she did not look tired and frightened any more.

" 'The man urged the oxen up the hill. They went slowly and they stumbled a little for it was growing dark and oxen seldom see well in the dusk. Up, up, up they went. There were not so many turns in the hill as there are now for the road has been made around the boulders—the trail led over them—and at last they were close to the dancing fairies.

" 'Lirrah-chu, lirrah-chu, lirrah-chu,' the fairies sang gleefully and then began to run away toward the spring.

" 'Where are you going?' the man called out. 'Please don't go away. Please don't.'

" 'But nevertheless they went, dancing all the time and singing, and as they went the man and woman followed

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them until, suddenly, the fairies vanished. At first the man and woman were frightened and filled with grief for they thought they had offended the little creatures. Then the woman remembered that everything had happened as the Indian woman, whom they had met on the road, said it would, and she was no longer sorrowful.

" 'We've found the place,' she whispered to her husband. 'The Indian woman said we'd come to where a spring burst from rocks and that there we should make our home. Shall we?'

"The man nodded his head and that night, just as we are going to do, they slept near the spring. In the morning they got up and washed in the water of the spring and that day they decided that they would go no farther into the north country, but would make their home near the fairies' home. They did. To-morrow I'll show you the house they built for themselves, and they lived here for many years, and during all the years they lived here, they stopped all travellers and begged them to take a drink of the water from the fairies' spring."

Ephraim finished his story and they were all silent until a whip-poor-will broke the stillness. Then Mary Louise asked, "Is that all?"

"Not quite," Captain Jack said, "for you don't know yet why the hill is called Camden Hill and why the spring is Camden Fairy spring."

"Oh, I think we do," Jean exclaimed. "It is because the man and the woman were called Camden and they were the first white people to come into our north country."

"That's right," Ephraim said, "exactly right, and I'll tell you something more; they were my great-great-grandfather and great-great-grandmother."

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"Oh, Ephraim!" four voices, filled with amazement and doubt, exclaimed at once.

"It's true," Ephraim said proudly, "and I first heard the story of Camden Hill and the fairies from my great-grandmother when I was no bigger than Mary Louise."

That night Mary Louise dreamed that fairies, tiny, dark-eyed Indian fairies, were dancing on her bed and singing to her, "Lirrah-chu, lirrah-chu—come hither, come hither."

CHAPTER XIII

THE PRINCESS ONADAGIN

MARY LOUISE was the first to waken next morning. She opened her eyes sleepily and then sat up on her stretcher to look about her—Jean was sleeping across from her; Alec, Jack, and Ephraim were outside; they were caravaning. Mary Louise slipped out of bed noiselessly, then out of the caravan door and down the steps.

Should she? It would be ever so much fun. Should she? She would. And away she went, out to the road and down it as fast as she could run. The road was rutty and stony but, nevertheless, Mary Louise ran so fast that one would have thought she was running away from Mrs. Grumble. She even tried to run up the first steep hill to which she came but the hills of the north country defy even the strongest runners—they will not be run up; they must be walked up and that very slowly.

Mary Louise walked up the hill and as she walked she had time to look about her. There were trees close to the road on one side and at the other the country stretched off in a field to a hill far away. "Perhaps Wesalmacoon Lake is over that hill," Mary Louise thought to herself.

In another moment she probably would have thought that it would be fun to walk on and on until she came to the hill and could look over it, but just then a rabbit dashed in front of her. A rabbit! Mary Louise was off after it at once, for she felt certain there must be baby rabbits close at hand. But a little girl from the city, no

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matter how clever she is, cannot climb a log fence as fast as a rabbit can slip between the logs. She gave up the search almost as quickly as she had begun it and went back to the road.

In which direction was she to go? That way? No, the other way. Which? Mary Louise did not know. While she was trying to decide she saw someone, she couldn't tell whether it was a man or a woman, standing at the top of the hill.

For a moment she was frightened. Who could it be? They had travelled all day yesterday, nearly fifteen miles, and had not seen a person. The "someone" standing there on the top of the hill looked very queer. "It", Mary Louise had to say "it", had on a bright green coat or dress and the brightest red sash she had ever seen. "It" had on the strangest blue hat or cap that one could imagine, as bright blue as the sash was bright red.

It is more than likely that if Alec had been there he would have pretended that the person was Robin Hood. Mary Louise wanted to pretend that it was Robin Hood but she could not. Who could it be? Not a fairy. Not Robin Hood. Not—well not anyone Mary Louise had ever heard of, anyway.

"I'll walk up quite close," she said to herself, "and say good-morning as politely as possible." One step taken quickly; another taken not so quickly; another, another; soon she would have to speak. The person turned and saw Mary Louise, so it was not Mary Louise who spoke but the person.

"Hello, little girl," the person said in a very soft voice. "I was on my way to call on the visitors, but it seems they're not awake yet."

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"Why, yes, they are awake," Mary Louise stumbled over her words. "At least, I'm awake."

"Oh, so you're one of them. Pleased to meet you," and the person, it was a woman, Mary Louise thought, bowed almost to the ground.

"I'm the Princess Onadagin," the person continued, "and we have so few visitors in our country, I want to tell you how welcome you are. The Princess Onadagin, that's me you understand, will be glad if you will visit her at her wigwam. Her white man husband will play music for you."

Mary Louise's eyes were almost popping out of her head with surprise. However, amazed and puzzled though she was, she managed to stumble out a few words of invitation. "Please come back with me now to our caravan," she said, "and invite the others, too."

"No," the princess replied, "it is enough that I ask one. If you come they'll come, and now I'll go back."

She smiled very sweetly and started down the hill on her way back to her wigwam. As she went past her Mary Louise saw that she had many rings on her fingers and that she had ever so many strings of brightly coloured beads on her neck—short strings, long strings and strings that were between long and short.

If Mary Louise ran when she was leaving the caravan she flew when she was returning. She had seen a princess, an Indian princess!

"Ephraim, Jack, Alec. she called out as soon as she saw them, "guess, guess whom I've been talking to. Guess!"

"Whom you've seen," Alec thought for a minute, "Oh, one of the Camden fairies, perhaps."

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"No."

"Well, a fire-ranger out on his rounds." This was Jack's guess, and although at any other time Mary Louise would have wanted to know a great deal about fire-rangers, she did not bother to ask now.

"No, not a fire-ranger. You guess, Ephraim."

"My guess is Indian Annie," Ephraim said.

"Oh, dear, no." Mary Louise was quite cross. "I met the Princess, the Princess Onadagin, and she had on, I think she had on, her court dress."

How they laughed! Alec and Jack until the tears rolled down their cheeks and until Alec had to sit down on the grass to rest.

"Someone's been pulling our little greenhorn's leg," Alec chuckled.

"No one was, I tell you. I met a lady. She had a green dress on and a blue hat with feathers and she had rings and beads and everything just like a princess, and she said 'I'm the Princess Onadagin, and I've come to invite you to visit me.' So there."

"The damsel has taken leave of her senses," Alec said mournfully. "Prithee pretty maid, wast thou bitten by some poisonous serpent?"

But Mary Louise was on her way to the caravan to tell Jean of the strange meeting and of the invitation. The boys, after talking together for a few minutes, went for a swim.

The boys may have had some excuse for being provoked when they returned and found no breakfast ready for them. They said very little about it, however, but set to work eagerly to help with the oranges and bread and bacon and milk. If Jean and Mary Louise had not been

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so engrossed in their plans for the day they would have noticed at once that the boys were more anxious than ever to be on the road.

As soon as breakfast was over Jack let them know that there must be no loitering. "We must be on our way," he announced, "else Mary Louise will be making dates with kings and queens and we've twenty miles to do to-day."

"Oh, no, not twenty miles," Jean begged. "We, Mary Louise and I, want to visit."

"Alas, this poor maiden, too, has likewise been bitten by the same serpent." Although Alec's voice was sad and doleful there was laughter in his eyes.

"But we must, we simply must visit the lady," Mary Louise said decidedly, "especially after I accepted her invitation."

By this time Jack and Ephraim had Barbara into the shafts once more and Jean and Mary Louise were forced to get into the caravan. As Ephraim was riding with Jack on the seat, Jean and Mary Louise sat on cushions at the door of the caravan.

"When do we see the home of your great-great-grandfather and great-great-grandmother?" Mary Louise asked Ephraim. She really was not so much interested in it now that she had been invited to the palace of a princess, but she hoped that mention of the Camden log-house might postpone their journey.

"Oh, we'll see it, never fear," Ephraim said. "We'll get there before long."

CHAPTER XIV

VISITING INDIAN ANNIE

"SEE over there," Ephraim called to Mary Louise and Jean. They scrambled up from their cushions and ran to look out of a window.

"What, the little tiny house?" Jean asked.

"Yes," Ephraim said. "That was the home of my great-great-grandfather and great-great-grandmother."

"But how can it be?" Mary Louise was doubtful. "You said it was at the foot of Camden Hill down near the river."

"And so it is," Ephraim laughed, "for Camden Hill is very long, and if you look you'll see the river down there."

"Please then let us stop and go to look at it," Mary Louise and Jean begged together.

"'Pon my word," Ephraim exclaimed suddenly under his breath, and then aloud he said, "Well, I'm thinking that if we go to see it we'll probably visit Mary Louise's princess at the same time."

"Oh goody, then let's!" This, of course, was from inside the caravan, and at the same time, Alec's voice came from the roof saying, "Poor Ephraim, first it was fairies and now it's a princess who has turned his head."

"Look," Ephraim said.

They all looked so eagerly and so hard that Barbara came to a standstill without anyone, not even her driver, Captain Jack, noticing. A very tall man with a shock of bright red hair was standing in front of the little log-house.

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It was neither the man nor his red hair, however, that caught the eyes of the caravaners. It was a swift moving figure in a glorious array of green and blue and red that held their attention. One moment the figure was in the garden in front of the house, the next it had disappeared within the house, only to rush out again, almost immediately, laden with what looked to be huge Christmas parcels.

"It's the Princess Onadagin," Mary Louise whispered.

"Is it, really? Are you sure?" Jean whispered back.

"Of course it is," Alec scoffed, "and that is no log house we see over there but the castle, the palace of the Princess Onadagin."

"And the princess is now preparing a reception for us, I suppose," Jack laughed as he slapped Barbara with the reins.

"But can't we stop when we're almost at her door?" Mary Louise asked.

"Don't worry. We'll stop," Ephraim said, and no sooner had he spoken than the Princess Onadagin spied the caravan on the road. She dropped her bundles and came running to the gate waving her hands and shouting a shrill welcome.

"Well, of all the crazy things," Alec exclaimed.

"I say, Ephraim," Jack said, "the creature will frighten Barbara, sure as anything."

"No, she won't. I'll speak to her," Ephraim was reassuring.

"Hello, there, Annie," Ephraim called, and as soon as she heard his voice, she stopped and stared.

"Well, I never. So you travel by covered wagon now." There was scorn and anger in her voice.

"Oh, I'm just acting as guide, you know," Ephraim

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said, "and the girl caravaners are anxious to visit the Princess Onadagin."

"And why shouldn't they, the little dears?" she cooed in a soft voice.

"Run along," Ephraim said, "and we'll tie Barbara to a tree here."

Mary Louise and Jean were down from the caravan in a twinkling and in less time than that, even, Alec was down from the room. "I say," he hissed to the girls, "your princess in only Indian Annie, after all." Scornful though he was, he went with them and did not wait for Jack and Ephraim.

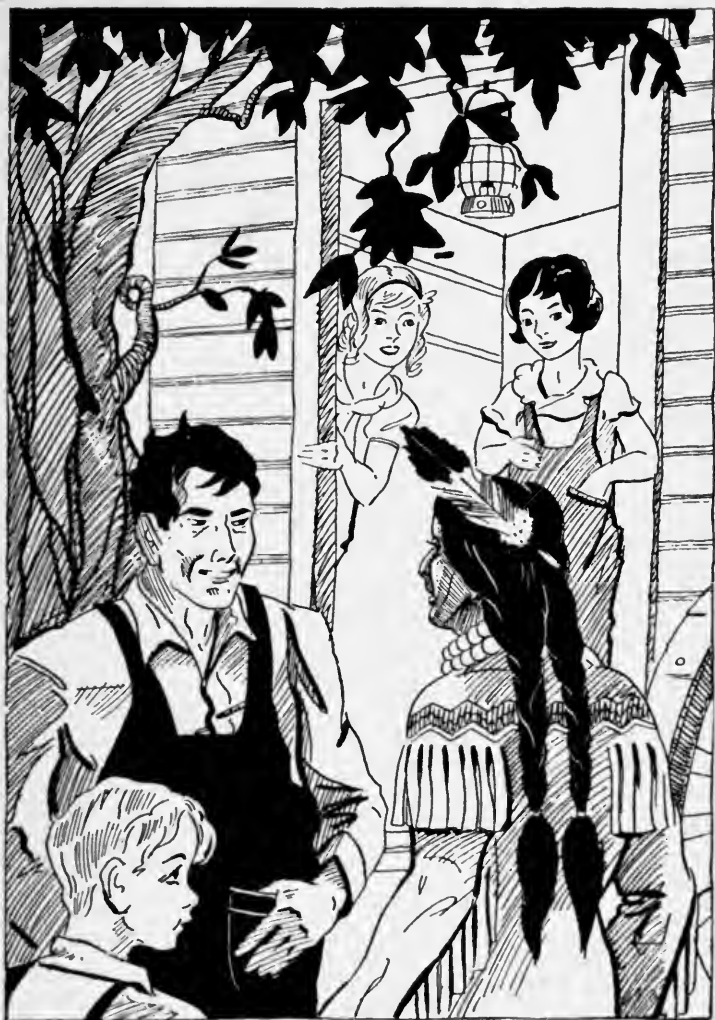
"Ah," Annie or Princess Onadagin said, "so this is my little friend of the morning. Come. I will welcome you to the home of Princess Onadagin."

The four of them approached the log cabin, the princess or Indian Annie talking all the time. "So charmed to have you visit me," she kept saying. "So honoured; so long since we've had visitors. Charmed! Charmed! Charmed!"

"And we're charmed, too," Alec said politely. "We hope you'll let us go into your castle."

"Castle," Princess Onadagin was scornful. "Me, I have no castle; that, I tell you, is my wigwam. I'm an Indian princess, I would have you know, and Indian princesses are content with wigwams. You should know that, Mr. Ephraim Woodcock."

"I beg your pardon." Alec began to say more, but they were in the garden now and he and Jean and Mary Louise could do nothing but stare at the brightly coloured baskets that were heaped in numerous piles on the ground. They were of every colour in the rainbow and of every shape imaginable.



"I will welcome you to the home of the Princess Onadagin."

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"See! Behold! Are they not beautiful?" Princess Onadagin exclaimed.

"Yes," breathed Jean and Mary Louise and Alec.

"I, I, the Princess Onadagin, I make them myself with my own hands."

"But how? Yourself? But how?" Jean and Mary Louise and Alec asked together.

"Yes, I, I myself. My white man husband, he is no help." The Princess Onadagin waved her hand disdainfully as she spoke.

Just then the white man husband came out of the castle, log house, or wigwam, whatever you wish to call it, and sat down on a bench at the door. He paid no attention to the visitors but took up a battered fiddle and began to clip its strings preparatory to playing it.

"You see," Princess Onadagin said, "You see. He does nothing but play, play, play. From morning till night and long after, he plays, and plays and plays." There was scorn mingled with pride in her voice.

"Please may we hold some of your baskets in our hands?" It was Mary Louise who asked the question.

"Yes, yes, little dear," the woman said and smiled a broad smile that showed her rows of pearly white teeth. She picked up one, then another, and another, ever so many and laid them at Mary Louise's feet. Another offering, if offering it could be called, was placed at Jean's feet.

"Smell," she commanded and held one close to Mary Louise's nose.

"Why, it's lovely. What makes it so sweet?" Mary Louise asked.

"Ah, my dears," the princess said in a mournful voice, "I, I myself go on a long journey over hills and far away

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to hunt for sweet grass and I pay, I pay money that would buy many plugs of tobacco, many pounds of sugar, many pounds of flour, strings of beads and many strips of fiddle string for that sweet grass. I, I myself do that, so that my visitors can have sweet grass baskets." With a deep sigh and a dramatic clasping of her hands the princess finished speaking.

"Hello, there, Eli, old chap," Ephraim called out as he approached the little group.

The white man husband who was launching into a tune, jumped quickly and stared at Ephraim.

"Good day, Mr. Ephraim Woodcock. Good day," he said slowly and almost bashfully. "I hardly expected to see you in these parts."

"No, not likely," Ephraim said good-naturedly, "but I'm caravanning this summer and I have to go where my fellow travellers go."

"Yes, yes, I suppose so." And without attempting to say any more the white man husband of the Princess Onadagin resumed his playing.

"Now, Annie, what are you trying to do? Strike a bargain for some of your baskets?" Ephraim turned his attention to the princess.

"No, I'm not, Mr. Ephraim Woodcock. I'm showing them my baskets, that's all. But if the little dears want to buy, maybe so, maybe not I'll sell," this last with a side-long smile at Alec and Jean and Mary Louise.

"They can't buy, Annie," Ephraim spoke decidedly, "for I have their money and I'll not give them a cent."

"Oh, Ephraim," from Mary Louise and Jean in very sad tones.

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"I sell, maybe so, and let you send me money." Indian Annie looked at the two girls.

"No," Ephraim said. "They can't for I'll not give them any money to send."

The princess, or Indian Annie was quiet for a few minutes. When next she spoke all the sweetness was gone from her voice. All she said was, "Then I, the Princess Onadagin, do not want you for visitors. You go now. I, the Princess Onadagin, say so."

And they went, Jean and Mary Louise very deeply chagrined, Alec, chuckling, and Ephraim laughing heartily. Nor did they look back when they got to the road. They climbed into the caravan and went jolting along on their journey.

After a long time Mary Louise got up enough courage to ask, "Why does she call herself Princess Onadagin?"

"Because she is," Ephraim said. "She is an Indian Princess but people find it hard to say her name so they call her Indian Annie."

"Is she always like that, angry if you don't buy her baskets?" Jean asked.

"Wait and see," was all Ephraim would say.

CHAPTER XV

CARAVAN AND CARAVANERS IN THE DITCH

THE Blue Fly Caravan went on its way until—no one could tell which happened first—a whistle that was sharper than a police siren and as loud as a ship's fog-horn was piercing the air, and Barbara was dashing madly into the ditch, the caravan tumbling after her. Then, and no one could tell how quickly, the Blue Fly Caravan was lying on its side in the ditch and the frantic Barbara, with tail in the air and her ears as straight as a rabbit's, was kicking viciously, kicking so high that her feet almost hit the front of the caravan.

With equal suddenness the whistle ceased its shrill cry and Barbara, quivering with fear and anger, stopped her desperate struggle to free herself from the shafts of the caravan. The caravaners themselves may have screamed, cried, or shouted, they could not tell, as they went tumbling into the ditch. It was four very frightened voices that, as soon as the din was over, piped out, "Ephraim! Ephraim! Ephraim! Ephraim!" It was four very frightened people, too, that struggled to their feet, Alec from the centre of a mud puddle into which he had partly jumped and partly bounced from his place on the top; Captain Jack from a tangle of wild raspberry bushes in the ditch and Mary Louise and Jean from forlorn heaps on the slanting floor of the caravan.

And Ephraim? Well, Ephraim was experienced. He recognized the whistle as that of a saw-mill and he knew

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both Barbara and the ditch. He knew, too, how to take a long leaping jump that would land him, not on all fours, but standing upright. Ephraim, then, was at Barbara's head soothing her with gentle words before she had stopped her fearful prancing. Even before the caravaners had gained breath enough to call his name, he was loosening Barbara from the shafts.

"Aye, aye, there. I hear you, and right glad I am that you're not struck dumb," Ephraim replied to the caravaners as they called his name.

"But I say, what was that terrible noise?" Captain Jack came rubbing his shins and staggering a little as though he were faint.

Alec stood in the road blinking his eyes and trying desperately to wipe the mud from his trousers. He had no questions to ask; for once, probably for the first time in his life, he was bereft of words. Mary Louise and Jean seemed to be in the same predicament, for they stumbled from the caravan door and sat down, speechlessly, on the slope of the ditch.

"What was it, begorra," Ephraim exclaimed. "It was the confounded dinner whistle of the Otter Mill over yonder. See!"

They had not seen it before, but down at the river's edge they saw now, first a great pile of sawdust, then the slab roof of the mill, and then the thin curling smoke from a high, narrow smoke-stack. As they looked they saw men coming from the mill, first a great fat man, then after him a throng of other men, all walking slowly because they were making their way through fresh sawdust.

"Hey there, you fellows, are you blind, deaf or both?" It was Ephraim that shouted.

CARAVAN AND CARAVANERS IN THE DITCH

All the men excepting the fat one, stopped at the sound of his voice. How they looked! Then they came on the run, all but the fat man who continued on his way to the cook-house.

"Say, where did you come from? Did you drop from the skies or what!" So they exclaimed as they came up the hill from the mill.

"Drop from the skies! No, we didn't. We dropped from the road and we did it just when that whistle of yours cut the ear drums of our horse." There was anger in Ephraim's voice, greater anger than any of the caravaners had heard before.

"And these kids, are they yours?" one man asked.

"Never mind about them, whose they are or anything," another man said, "until we get them down to the cook-house and get their horse tied up. Come along, young ones."

And they went, a very quiet procession, Ephraim in the lead with Mary Louise and Jean, and Alec and Jack behind. Several of the men ventured to ask questions but each time they were silenced by the man who had said they were not to be questioned until they got to the cook-house.

The cook-house was a queer, long, low building made partly of fresh lumber and partly of slabs, with here and there a stretch of tar-paper. As they approached it Mary Louise whispered in a trembling voice to Ephraim, "Are we going to that funny house? Are you sure witches don't live in it?"

Ephraim had no time to reassure her, for just then the fat man hove in sight and no sooner did he see Ephraim than a great grin spread over his red face and no sooner did Ephraim see him, than he called out, "So, and this is what

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you're doing, Sam McGoey, frightening horses, and smashing wagons."

Ephraim's voice may have sounded angry, but the friendly manner in which he went forward to shake hands with the fat man, showed that they were the best of friends.

It may have been fear, or it may have been relief at finding herself among friends, or it may have been joy at seeing the kind face of a woman in the doorway of the cook-house; it may have been anything, but whatever it was, it caused Mary Louise to burst into tears. And not only to burst into tears but to stay in them so long that Jean followed her.

"My dears, my dears," the woman said soothingly as she led them into the cook-house and to a little cubby-hole room behind it, "You must not cry like that. Tell me what happened. Don't be afraid. You're safe as safe with Maggie McGoey. She'll not let anyone or anything hurt you."

Still they cried, Mary Louise with small gulpy sobs and Jean with shrill wails that, although they were weaker, resembled the siren-like whistle that had sent Barbara rampaging. Once the fat man ventured to put his head in at the door of the room but his wife waved him back. Ephraim looked in, too, but he, likewise, was dismissed with a wave of the hand.

"Now, my dears," Mrs. McGoey spoke decidedly, "I'm going to put you to bed here and then when you're rested we'll have a nice talk and you can tell me all about what happened."

"Put us to bed," Mary Louise stopped crying long enough to exclaim. "But where?"

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"Here, of course," and Mrs. McGoey pointed to a dark object in the corner.

"I never saw a bed like that," Mary Louise said slowly. "Is it really a bed and why has it got a lid on it?"

"Well, no it's not exactly a bed," Mrs. McGoey said. "It's a bunk. See, the lower part is a bed, and the upper part in another bed. Come and look at it."

Jean, by this time, had become interested, too, and the two of them approached the bunk curiously and dubiously.

"I don't think I'd like sleeping with a lid over me," Mary Louise whispered to Jean.

"Neither would I," Jean whispered back, but nevertheless, Mrs. McGoey began turning down the quilt and sheet and shaking up the pillows.

"Now off with your shoes," she commanded, "and give me your overalls, and in you get."

They did not want to sleep; they really and truly did not, but neither did they know how to resist Mrs. McGoey.

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Out in the cook-house the men were sitting around the table eating their dinner. Places had been made for Ephraim, Jack and Alec and between mouthfuls of boiled ham and potatoes the men asked them many questions. What were they, gypsies? Where were they going? What were they going to do when they got there?

"Leave the youngsters alone, and let them eat their dinner," Sam McGoey begged. "It'll be soon enough to get them talking after we get their blue wagon back on the road."

"Are we to haul that wagon back?" one man asked.

"We'll do more than that likely," another said, "for

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I'm thinking one shaft is splintered and that Dame Barbara ripped one of her traces to pieces when she went flighty."

"Then you'll be having company for a bit," Ephraim laughed, "So you'd best hire a couple of us for your gang, Sam."

"All right," Mr. McGoeysaid, "I'm needing someone to haul sawdust. I could put that young chap driving and hitch your horse to the cart. How'd that be?" this last to Alec.

But Alec was tongue-tied. He had no reply ready, so he just stared down at his plate. Jack was no better prepared when the question was put to him, so there was nothing to do but ask Ephraim a little more about their expedition.

Ephraim was willing enough to talk, but what he had to say was not so much about the caravan and the caravaners as it was about the mill whistle that had frightened Barbara. "There should be a law, either a township or county law, that wouldn't let you bring such a thing into the country," he said. "It's enough to frighten the daylight out of a pack of wolves."

The men laughed and said that they had to have a whistle to let off engine steam, and to let them know when it was time to eat. "Pshaw!" Ephraim replied to that, "I know when it's time to eat by my stomach."

Pipes followed the raisin pie that followed the ham and potatoes, and after the pipes came the mill whistle and a hurried procession of men down the hill to the mill at the river's edge. Not all of the men returned to the mill, for Sam McGoeysaid and one or two others went up the hill with Ephraim, Jack, and Alec, to the caravan.

CHAPTER XVI

AT THE OTTER CAMP

WHEREVER could she be? Not in the white bedroom at 'Tall Trees'. Not in the caravan. Where? Ah, now she remembered—she was in a bunk, in a queer, low cubby-hole room, and she had been put there by a friendly, smiling woman whose name was Mrs. McGoey. The one recollection brought many but before they could either frighten her or make her homesick, Mary Louise had jumped down from the bunk and begun looking about eagerly for her shoes and socks and overalls.

Mary Louise had no idea of how long she had been asleep. She remembered though, that when Mrs. McGoey had hurried them into bed, there had been a great deal of noise, laughter and rattling of dishes in the cook-house. Now, as she pulled back the curtain, there was not a sound, and as she peeped out, there was not a person in sight. For a moment she thought of turning back to waken Jean. As she was about to do so, her eyes fell on a row of pies and one large cake on the long table, and, because she knew quite suddenly that she was ravenously hungry, she hurried over to them.

How good they looked, the pies golden brown, and the cake, with a lovely thick chocolate icing! Mary Louise looked and looked and, as she looked, she grew hungrier and hungrier. "I could eat a whole one of those pies, I could really and truly," she said to herself. "And I could

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eat nearly all that cake and I could eat, oh, almost anything even if there were ever so much of it."

She put her hand out to draw one of the pies to her, not to eat it, but just to look at it closely, and, perhaps, to get a whiff of its delicious goodness. A little piece of the crust broke off in her hand and she put it in her mouth quickly. It made her hungrier, ever so much hungrier, so she drew another pie to her in order to see if a tiny weeny piece of crust might break from it, too. And it did and it made her hungrier, still. Poor Mary Louise! She was just about to draw another pie over and was planning that the cake should come next, when she heard a door slam. She drew her hand away from the pie plate quickly and looked up to see Mrs. McGoeys coming in at the door.

"Well, and so one of my gypsies is awake, I see," Mrs. McGoeys said, "and hungry, I suppose she is, as hungry as a wolf."

"Yes," Mary Louise said reluctantly, "I am rather hungry. Would you give me some lunch, please?"

"I expect I'd better," Mrs. McGoeys answered slowly, "else I'll be having no pies or cake for the men to-night."

Mary Louise's face became very red, and she put her tell-tale hand with the tiny weeny piece of pie-crust between its fingers, behind her back. She moved away from the table and started toward the curtained doorway.

"Don't waken the other gypsy," Mrs. McGoeys said, "but come along with me while I get your lunch ready. We'll give her some when she wakes."

The uncomfortable look left Mary Louise's face and instead a broad smile spread over it. "Perhaps you could get her lunch, too, and then when it's all ready I could call her," she suggested.

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"That's a good idea," Mrs. McGoeY nodded, "but come along. We'll go to the well first."

"May I carry the pail?" Mary Louise asked.

"There is no pail to carry," Mrs. McGoeY replied, "but you may have the pitcher."

It was the biggest pitcher she had ever seen. It was ever so high and ever so wide, and it was of blue granite. Mary Louise took it without asking any more questions and followed Mrs. McGoeY through the door. The well was in the opposite direction from the mill and on the side of a hill that sloped up from the cook-house. It had a box around it, and Mrs. McGoeY took a long, slender pole that was fastened at the side of the box and slipped it down into the water.

"You're not fishing, are you?" Mary Louise questioned.

"Yes," Mrs. McGoeY said, "and this is what I caught. Look!" It was a high pail, higher than any pail Mary Louise had ever seen. It had a lid fitted on the top and a tap in the side very near the bottom. Mrs. McGoeY rested the pail, she called it a creamer, on the side of the well and told Mary Louise to hold her pitcher under the tap. Mrs. McGoeY then turned the tap and a stream of creamy milk, not water, came from the can.

"That's milk for you and milk for the supper," Mrs. McGoeY said as she fastened the tap and slipped the creamer back into the well.

"What do you think of my refrigerator?" she asked Mary Louise.

"Do you keep other things there, too?" Mary Louise asked.

"No, just the milk. I'll have to show you my other refrigerators though. The next will be the butter one."

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The butter refrigerator was under the floor of the cook-house. Mrs. McGoeY knelt down on the floor, lifted a small trap-door, and then reached down, so far down that Mary Louise thought she would surely fall over into the hole.

"Come and look," she invited Mary Louise. The hole was very deep and it was lined with stones that were fitted very closely together. A huge crock was in the hole and Mrs. McGoeY took from it a sausage-like roll of butter.

"Have you any more refrigerators?" Mary Louise asked.

"Yes, two more," Mrs. McGoeY told her, "but we'll not need to go to them just now."

"What do you keep in them?" Mary Louise was becoming so interested in these queer refrigerators that she was almost forgetting she was hungry.

"Meat in one and it's over there. See," and she pointed outside toward the hill. "See," she directed again, "there's a door facing this way."

Mary Louise looked and at last she saw a door in what seemed to be the side of the hill. "That's what we call a root-house," Mrs. McGoeY said, "but just now it has nothing but meat and canned fruit in it. The other one is nothing more than a hole in the ground with a wooden box in it, and green grass over it. In it we keep potatoes and other vegetables."

By the time Mrs. McGoeY had finished telling Mary Louise about her refrigerators she had lunch on the table, and Mary Louise went to call Jean. There was no need to call her, however, for just as Mrs. McGoeY had poured out two mugs of milk, Jean lifted the curtain and stepped into the room.

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As they ate their lunch Mrs. McGoey asked them ever so many questions, questions not about the caravan and Barbara, but about their fathers and mothers and where they lived when they were at home.

"I live in Madoc," Jean told her, "but when Mary Louise is at home she is ever so far away. She lives in Ottawa but just now she lives with her aunt at 'Tall Trees'."

"'Tall Trees'!" Mrs. McGoey exclaimed. "Well upon my word! You don't mean to say your aunt is Maria Graham, is she?"

Mary Louise nodded her head.

"Now who would have thought it," Mrs. McGoey continued. "Then you are the youngster Lizzy told me about. You are John Graham's child."

Mary Louise nodded her head again.

"Well of all things!" Mrs. McGoey sat down in a chair and looked at Mary Louise very hard.

"I'm a sister to Elizabeth Grumble," she said at last.

Mary Louise looked at Jean and Jean looked at Mary Louise. Mrs. McGoey saw the look and knew by it that neither one of them liked Mrs. Grumble very well.

"She's really not a bad sort, Lizzy isn't when you get to know her. Her name is worse than she is herself," Mrs. McGoey said laughingly as she hurried away to build up the fire in the cook-stove, preparatory to getting supper ready for the men.

CHAPTER XVII

THE PRINCESS ONADAGIN AGAIN

THAT night after the caravan had been pried from its unseemly place in the ditch and had been drawn down to the dooryard of the cook-house, the caravaners sat with the little group of mill hands, listening to yarns of "bush whacking" and river-drives. It had been decided, by whom and why they did not quite know, that they should spend the night at the Otter Camp. None of them had been altogether pleased when the decision was made, but as they sat listening to stories of men dashing from one jam of logs to another and to stories of grim attacks by timber wolves they were more than glad that Ephraim and Mrs. McGoey had induced them to stay.

Perhaps it was because they were listening and not talking that Jean and Mary Louise were the first to hear the soft tinkling sound of music. At first it sounded very mournful and far away as music always does when it comes from over hills. Gradually it became louder and, with the added strength, there was a note of gaiety. Mary Louise and Jean moved closer to one another and Mary Louise slipped a hand into the friendly clasp of Mrs. McGoey. The talking continued and with it laughter and deep puffs from pipes. Mary Louise and Jean heard neither the talk nor the laughter, for they were listening eagerly to the music. Louder and still louder it came until in a great burst of shrill notes, the player appeared at the top of the hill above the cook-house.

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"Look, oh look!" Jean and Mary Louise exclaimed together.

"By Jove," one of the men said, "You'd think he'd sprung from the ground, wouldn't you?"

As they looked another figure came to the top of the hill and stood beside the player.

"Who are they? Are they fairies, do you think?" Mary Louise whispered to Mrs. McGoey.

"No, indeed they're no fairies," one of the men, who had heard Mary Louise's query, replied.

"I'm going up to see them," Alec rose from the box on which he had been sitting.

"Don't do that," Mr. McGoey advised, "for they'll just go away if you do. We'll pay no attention to them for awhile."

The men resumed their conversation and for a few minutes the caravaners tried to listen to them, but they heard very little for they, all four of them, kept their eyes on the hill and on the two dark figures at the top. They stood there, still and straight and, for what seemed hours to the caravaners, they made no sound.

"Come along, Alec. We'll go up anyway," Jack said to his brother.

Before they could rise from their seats, a queer, wailing note of music came from the hill. At first it was low, as weak as the cry of a baby and gradually it grew until it was sharp and high. As quickly as it had come and as quickly as it had changed from low to high, it became as long and steady as the baying of a wolf. The next moment it was as pitiful as the call of a distant whip-poor-will, the next as saucy as that of a whip-poor-will close at hand.

Still the men went on talking.

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Once more Alec and Jack rose from their seats to go to the hill. Mr. McGoey put out his hand to stop them but there was no need for, suddenly, the two figures disappeared from the hill. They went so quickly that Mary Louise felt certain that they were fairies who could make themselves invisible.

As quickly as they had come and disappeared, they were back again, this time to the strains of a light tune played on a mouth organ. Before any one of the onlookers could exclaim on their sudden return, one figure began to move in a dance. Arms outstretched, first toward the group in front of the cook-house, then to the sky, and then to the distance far beyond the mill, and all the time the music grew faster and faster and the dancer at last, was whirling about like a top at the climax of its speed.

The dancer sank to the ground in a heap and the musician dropped his lilting tune for one of pathetic mournfulness.

"You may go now," Mr. McGoey whispered to Alec and Jack.

"I'll go with you," one of the men said, "but wait until we pass the hat around." As he spoke he removed the cap from the back of his head. The men began hunting about in their pockets for nickels and dimes and quarters and these they dropped into the cap when it was passed to them. The caravaners motioned to Ephraim to put money in for them and as he did he said, "Well, it's the best concert I've ever heard them give."

"Why, Ephraim Woodcock," Mary Louise exclaimed as she went over to him, "do you know who they are? Do you really and truly know? Are they fairies?"

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"Of course I know," Ephraim laughed, "and I think you'll know, too, in a moment. Look!"

The figures were moving, this time toward the group. They came slowly, the one playing his mouth organ very softly and the other, the one who had danced, giving plaintive little bird calls. As they drew near Alec, Jack, and the man with money in his cap, went to meet them.

"We greet you, most noble princess," the man with the money said in a very deferential voice.

"Princess!" Mary Louise and Jean gasped. "Why, it's Indian Annie. It's Princess Onadagin!"

And it was the Princess Onadagin and her white man husband. They sat down very quietly in the little circle, and as they did so, Mrs. McGoey hurried into the cook-house. Mary Louise was tempted, at first to follow her, but as she was about to go, she felt her hand caught in a very firm grasp.

The hand that detained her was that of the princess and before she could be frightened the Indian woman's soft voice whispered, "Sit still, little girl. I came here to see you and to bring you a present."

"A present for me!" Mary Louise was both surprised and excited.

"Yes. The Princess Onadagin is sorry she was so rude to little girl, this morning. She has come all this long way to tell you she is sorry. She brings you, see, a beautiful little box made of sweet grass." As she finished speaking she pressed a fragrant box into Mary Louise's hand.

It was too dark for her to see that it was closely woven, and that it had a great variety of bright colours. Its fragrance, however, was most pleasing, and Mary Louise drew in deep breaths of its sweetness.

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"The Princess Onadagin has box for the other little girl, too," the Indian woman continued, "and she asks you to come and visit with her when you are going home. The Princess is sorry, very sorry she was nasty this morning."

Jean accepted her gift very gracefully, but before she could voice her thanks Mrs. McGoey came from the cook-house with a tray laden with food. The arrival of the food aroused the white man husband of the Princess Onadagin. He almost leapt from the box on which he was sitting.

"Now, now, not so fast, my good man," the princess admonished him.

He resumed his seat but he watched the tray eagerly. Mrs. McGoey and, indeed, all the members of the group, knew that he was ravenously hungry. Not that the Princess Onadagin starved her poor white man husband; not at all, but the Princess Onadagin, in quite princessly fashion, could not or would not cook. During the summer she was willing to eat berries and roots of wild plants boiled to a mushy pulp, sometimes with a bit of dried venison, and she could not understand why her husband was not satisfied with such fare.

Now as he took a sandwich in each hand and ate them in huge bites, she laughed apologetically and said—perhaps with pride, but with some disappointment—"Him, he'll be white man always, always, I guess."

She herself refused the sandwiches, but she took a mug of milk as eagerly as her husband did the bread. She drank it as quickly as he ate the bread, but she, unlike him, refused a second helping.

As soon as the princess had finished her milk she rose from her seat and said, "We go now. Come, white man."

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The man was reluctant to go, but there was nothing to do but follow his wife, for before anyone could say a word to detain them, she was running toward the hill. At the top, she stopped, turned and waved, and then disappeared.

Her husband followed her slowly, and as he went he ate a large piece of pie that Mrs. McGoey had handed him as he was leaving.

"A queer fellow, isn't he? He said neither 'How do you do' when he came, nor 'Thank you' when I gave him the collection money, nor 'Good-night' when he went. I wonder if he ever speaks," the man concluded.

"Oh yes, I've heard him talk, but never, I think, never when Annie's with him." It was Ephraim who spoke and he went on to tell what he knew of the white man husband of the princess.

"He met her one summer when she was working at a summer hotel down east," he said. "She was selling baskets and trying to show the women guests how to make them. He was working there, too, mowing lawns and polishing the silver. She told him she was rich, that her father was a chief, and so he came back here with her."

"And is her father a chief?" Mary Louise asked.

"He was," Ephraim said. "He was the Chief Wesalmacoon. We're going to his lake, you know."

"What, to Wesalmacoon! Is that where you're bound for?" Mr. McGoey questioned. "Well, 'pon my word, young lady, you'll need to be careful there. The salmon in that lake are that impudent they'll nibble your toes and it's more than likely you'll be seeing all kinds of Indian fairies there, and I shouldn't be surprised if you fell in with a great crowd of gypsies, too."

Fish and fairies and gypsies! It is no wonder that

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Mary Louise did not want to go to bed just at that moment, but there was nothing else for her to do, for Mrs. McGoey was at the door calling them, she and Jean, to the cook-house.

They were to sleep in the upper part of the bunk, above Mrs. McGoey's bed, and the boys were to go to the bunk-house with the men.

CHAPTER XVIII

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

THE Blue Fly Caravan, with all the caravaners either on its roof or its spring-wagon seat continued its journey in the morning. It may have been the sweet fragrance of cedar trees or of fresh sawdust, or the generous breakfast Mrs. McGoey had given them, or the prospect of catching a first glimpse of the dark blue waters of Wesalmacoon Lake, or it may have been all of them combined, that made the caravaners unusually happy and eager for their journey.

"Are you sure we'll get to Wesalmacoon to-day?" Captain Jack asked Mr. McGoey as Barbara pulled away from the door-yard of the cook-house.

"You'll see it, my boy, I have no doubt, and that before sundown," Mr. McGoey shouted as he waved his hand.

"Watch out for Ephraim and don't let your prancing steed run over him," another man shouted.

Ephraim was not well acquainted with the road north of the Otter Camp and for that reason he had gone on ahead on his bicycle. He had told Captain Jack that if the road became too narrow for the caravan, or if he smelled too many bears, or ran into gypsies, he would come back to warn them. If everything were well, however, he would go on to Wesalmacoon and have their camping ground picked out for them when they arrived.

Mary Louise and Jean had heard what he said about bears and as Barbara jogged slowly through the first deep gully of the road, they became alarmed. The bush came

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close to either side of the road, and bears, they knew, always made their homes in damp shady places. They heard the sharp tick-tack of woodpeckers and thought that the sound was that made by a bear beating his strong tail on a tree. They heard twigs breaking and dead leaves rustling and were convinced that he would be upon them almost at once.

"Jack, what do you think Barbara would do if a great big black bear walked out of the woods now?" Mary Louise asked.

Before Jack had a chance to answer, Alec was ready with a reply, "Barbara wouldn't have a chance to do anything for the bear would have her by the throat quicker than you could say Calabogie."

"Oh! Oh!" The distress in the voices of Mary Louise and Jean evidently pleased Alec for he continued.

"And no sooner would the bear have choked Barbara than all the bear cubs would be after us. First we'd throw Jean down to them and next we'd pitch Mary Louise into their midst and then as they cracked her bones and smacked their lips Jack and I would take to our heels."

"But, I thought—" Mary Louise began to speak in a very little voice.

"Oh, he's only trying to frighten you, Mary Louise," Jack reassured her. "No bear is coming out and, if it did, it would only blink its eyes, wag its tail and hurry back to its family."

"Are you sure?" Jean's voice was as shaky as Mary Louise's.

"Of course, you silly. Don't you know that in the summer the strongest thing about a bear is his smell. He wouldn't attack anything or anybody. At least the only

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thing he would attack is a bee's nest, and that's only because he's a glutton for honey." Jack said this so convincingly that Mary Louise and Jean were comforted. They even begged Jack to stop several times so that they might look more closely into the woods for a bear.

But no bear appeared. Once or twice a rabbit dashed across the road but almost before they had seen it, it had vanished. They saw several bright tawny squirrels, scooting along low branches of trees, but they were as shy as the rabbits.

"Let's watch for woodchucks," Alec suggested, "and when we see one I'll swoop down and catch it."

"A woodchuck, whatever would we do with it?" Jean asked.

"'Tis easily seen that you have no knowledge of the bush, my dear sister," Alec replied, "or else you'd know we'd make soup of the woodchuck."

"Woodchuck soup doesn't sound very good," Captain Jack said. "Where did you ever hear of it?"

But Alec had never heard of it so his only reply was a merry laugh. After that no one paid much attention to his stories of woodchucks, bears, skunks and porcupines, although once, Mary Louise nearly fell from her seat as she jumped to avoid a porcupine quill that Alec said was coming toward her.

"Look out, Mary Louise," he shouted, "it's coming right for your heart. Look out, I say, it's a porcupine quill."

"You're not up there to frighten everyone. You're on the roof because you can see ever so far ahead. Keep your eyes and your mind on the road." Captain Jack spoke

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very severely, and for awhile although he chuckled softly to himself, Alec was quiet.

The road grew narrower and narrower as it wound through deep valleys and up steep hills, until it became no more than a trail. Barbara seemed to resent travelling on it for as it became narrower she became slower.

"Get into a trot, Barb, do, please," Jack cried to encourage her. "The sooner we get there, the sooner you'll get your harness off."

The only reply she gave to this was an angry switch of her tail. Finally at the bottom of a particularly steep hill, she came to a dead stop and the urging of all the caravaners could not prevail upon her to move. She stood there, switching her tail and pawing the ground with one foot. "I will not move; I won't, I won't," she seemed to be saying.

As they sat there, each one trying to think of some way of persuading Barbara to climb the hill, Alec caught the faint tinkle of water. Quick as a flash he was down from his perch on the roof, and before anyone could ask him what he was about he had gone into the caravan for a pail.

"I know what the old girl wants," he shouted as he started in the direction of the spring. "She's thirsty. See if I'm not right."

And sure enough he was right. Once Barbara had had a drink she went on her way quite willingly. Indeed, she seemed to get a great deal of satisfaction out of climbing hills and she even ventured to trot down one or two of them.

CHAPTER XIX

WESALMACOON AT LAST

"I DON'T think we'll ever get there," Mary Louise sighed as Barbara began to go up another hill.

"Have patience, my child," Alec called down from the roof. "Remember, Mr. McGoey said we'd get there before sundown and it's not noon yet."

"Oh, look," Jean exclaimed, and with her exclamation Barbara came to a standstill, this time, not because she wanted to but because Captain Jack had drawn in the reins.

They were at the foot of the longest hill they, any of them, had ever seen. It went up and up—and up, like so may hills piled on top of one another. Trees lined one side of the road as it led up the hill, but on the other there was a great wall of rocks.

"We're nearly there," Captain Jack announced as he loosened the reins and Barbara began the ascent.

"How do you know?" the others asked.

"Just wait and see," was all Jack would say.

Up to the top of what seemed the first hill, and Barbara paused to rest for the next one. Up the next, and the next, and then—Jean got it first, the tangy smell of water. Barbara got it next and perked up her ears.

"See," the exclamation came from all of them.

And there below them was the lake, so deep a blue that they knew it could be no other than Wesalmacoon. Its waters were very still and neither on it or on its shores were

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there any signs of life. Not a sail, not a bather, not even a fisherman. Not even a gull swooping over it.

Barbara went down the hill very slowly and as she went not one of the caravaners ventured to say a word. It seemed as though the lake had cast a spell over them, as old stories say it did, over Indians many, many years ago, and over the first men who came to its shore.

There was a gate at the foot of the hill and at the gate Ephraim was standing waiting for them. He waved his hand to them and motioned to Jack to turn in at the gate, but he was as speechless as they.

It was not until Barbara stopped in a little clearing beyond the gate and they had all jumped to the ground that anyone spoke. It was Ephraim who broke the silence.

"I was afraid you'd come rushing and shouting and singing," he said, "and if you had, I don't know what would have happened to you."

"Why?" Mary Louise asked, "There's no sign up saying 'Quiet, please'."

"Those who come quietly to Wesalmacoon," Ephraim said softly, "make friends with the fairies of the lake, but those who talk and laugh and shout before they set foot on Wesalmacoon ground, become the enemies of the fairies."

Ephraim's face was serious, and it became stern when Alec grunted scornfully, "Uh, who believes in fairies, anyway? Only Mary Louise, I guess, and she's never seen one."

"Hush, my boy. There are stories told of this lake that would make you believe in fairies, I can tell you." Ephraim's voice was not only stern; it was almost angry.

"Please, Ephraim, tell us about them," Jean begged.

"Yes, I'll do that," Ephraim promised, "but not until



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we've unhitched Barbara so that she may rest, and unpacked some of our things."

"We'll save the story until after we have had our dinner," Jack said.

It took so long to build a fire and to get dinner ready and to find a comfortable nook for Barbara, that Ephraim could not tell his story until after sundown.

"Come with me down to the shore," he invited, "and as we sit there, I'll tell you the story of Wesalmacoon."

Although Alec was openly scornful of fairies, he was never averse to a story of fairies, so he went as eagerly as Jean and Mary Louise. Even Captain Jack went, but as he went he said, in a very grown-up voice, "I can't say I think much of fairy stories."

When they were all seated on the gray sands of the lake-shore and were looking across its dark blue waters that now were tinted with deep purple and rose, Ephraim began his story.

"Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years ago an Indian chief named Wesalmacoon lived here. He was good to all his people; he helped them when they were sick and he always went with the braves when they went out to search for food. There was something else that he did which made him dearly loved. Every year he sent an invitation to Indians far and near, to bring their sick ones to this lake. He even sent braves of his own to help them carry those who were too sick to walk."

"But why, why should they come here?" Jean asked.

"Because the waters of Wesalmacoon heal sick people, at least so the Indians thought and later, many white people thought so too," Ephraim replied.

"One year he sent his invitation out, but before the

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braves who had taken it had time to come back, great crowds of Indians, of an unknown tribe came breaking through the trees and as they came they yelled and screamed. Chief Wesalmacoon went out to meet them but before he could say a kind word, they began laughing at him."

" 'We've come to take your lake away,' one of them told him.

" 'Yes and we'll take you, too', another one said.

"With that there was more shouting and laughing and one bold brave went up to Chief Wesalmacoon and seized his arms. Another took his feet, and still others approached to bind him. As they were doing this others of the throng went to the water's edge to fill their bark buckets with water."

Here Ephraim paused for a long time and looked out, across the water.

"You see how calm the water is now," he continued. "Well, it was as still and peaceful that day as it is now, until the Indians dipped their buckets into it. Then suddenly the waters became angry. They seethed until great waves, capped with foam were beating against the shore and every time the waves came into the shore an Indian was carried away in them."

Ephraim paused again.

"All of those Indians were drowned. Even those who were binding Chief Wesalmacoon, were carried away when they tried to save their brothers."

"But Ephraim—" one of the caravaners began, but Ephraim raised his hand to silence him.

"And ever since that day when people come laughing and shouting to the shores of Wesalmacoon the waters be-

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came angry. Great waves lash the shores and woe betide the person who is near them."

The caravaners were quiet for a long time after Ephraim had finished the tale of Wesalmacoon. At last, however, Alec broke the silence with a question.

"Who told you the story, Ephraim?" he asked.

"I don't know who first told it to me," Ephraim said, "but I think it was my father for he was here once when the Wesalmacoon fairy was terribly, terribly angry. I've heard it many times, though, and once, I remember, from a Chief Wesalmacoon, the one who is the father of the Princess Onadagin."

"Well, anyway," Jean drew a deep sigh, "I hope that we don't make the fairy angry."

"Ephraim, do you think," Mary Louise asked, "do you think that if we were to stay here until it was dark, the fairy might come and talk to us?"

Ephraim only shook his head and smiled. In the face of Alec's scorn of fairies, he would not dare to venture an opinion. Mary Louise, however, dared to interpret his smile and silence and that night after she and Jean had gone to bed in the caravan, she whispered to Jean, "I'm going to step out of here, and go down to the shore of the lake. Will you come with me, Jean?"

CHAPTER XX

FAIRIES AND FISH

MARY LOUISE and Jean stirred sleepily. Jean put out her hand and touched Mary Louise's bed. "Maryloo," she whispered, "do you remember?"

With that Mary Louise opened her eyes wider and sat up. Did she remember? What did she remember? She was in bed in the caravan, but how had she gotten there? She did not have on her pyjamas but her work-a-day overalls. She even had on her shoes.

Then she remembered.

She was wide awake. "Why, yes, I remember," she exclaimed, "the fairy, or I think it was the fairy, brought us here, didn't she?"

"Yes and she told us it was lucky for us that it was a fairy and not a hawk that picked us up," Jean chuckled.

"Oh, do you remember that she said 'Now to bed, you chicks, and perhaps, just perhaps, I'll come to see you in the daylight?' Do you remember?" Mary Louise clapped her hands gleefully and jumped from the bed.

"It'll be fun telling the boys about it," Jean said as she removed one of her shoes and shook the sand from it. "They'll laugh and tease us and then when she comes I'll say, 'Fairy Wesalmacoon, will you meet my brothers, Jack and Alec'."

"And I want to see their faces then," Mary Louise laughed.

Mary Louise and Jean, after they had found soap and

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towels, went down to the lake to wash. It was hard for them not to go in swimming right away, but they could not for they had promised Ephraim that they would not think of going into the water, not even to wade, unless he was there.

It was when they were returning to the caravan that they caught a whiff of bacon cooking, or was it bacon? Anyway it was something that smelled very, very good.

"Hello, there, sleepy heads," a voice called out. "Come along to breakfast." It was Alec and as he came toward them he held up a silvery fish.

"You'll have to hurry," Jack added his voice, "or else I'll eat your fish and mine too."

"Fish for breakfast, but where did you get them?" Mary Louise and Jean asked together.

"Oh, a fairy brought them to us this morning," Alec said. "All cleaned and ready to cook. She says she always catches fish for people who believe in fairies."

"Did she really?" Again Mary Louise and Jean asked a question together.

"Yes, and she said that if we wanted to go home or to Switzerland, or anywhere at all, she'd take us in her aeroplane." Then Jean and Mary Louise knew that Alec was making fun of them and that a fairy had not brought the fish.

"Don't believe him," Ephraim said as he came forward with a pan of fish. "We went fishing this morning at break of day and we've cooked part of our catch for breakfast."

Jean hurried into the caravan to get plates and forks and bread and Jack went after her to help her carry them out.

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It was not until they had finished breakfast and after Ephraim and Alec and Jack had told about finding a boat that Jean and Mary Louise ventured to mention their adventure of the night before. They were uncertain of how to tell them that they had made friends with one of the fairies of Wesalmacoon, but they had to tell them, for they could not keep it a secret. It was Jean who began the story.

"You may think we're sleepy heads," she said, "but if you'd had the exciting time we had last night I think you would have slept late this morning, too."

"Why, pretty lady, wast thou at a party last night?" It was Alec, of course, who asked.

"A party, yes, I think it was a party," Mary Louise spoke slowly, "but it was far more wonderful than any party you've ever been at, Mr. Alec Simmonds."

But Alec was not impressed and neither was Jack for they both started to laugh and they said together, "It would seem that these fair maidens had strange dreams last night."

"Dreams! It is no dream that we met a fairy last night and we talked to her and she walked to the caravan door with us and she said perhaps she would come to visit us in daylight. So there!"

"You did, just like I caught a whale this morning—and Ephraim caught a shark and the first fish Jack caught said 'Don't cut off my head, naughty boy'."

Alec could talk as fast as Mary Louise and when he was finished speaking the two of them were shaking their heads at each other wrathfully.

"I don't believe you at all," Mary Louise said.

"And I'm certain I don't believe you," Alec flung back as he went hurrying into the caravan to hunt for his bathing suit.

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"Believe it or not," Jean called to him, "it's the truth anyway. I was there and saw the fairy, too."

"Tell me about it, will you?" Ephraim asked as Jack followed Alec to the caravan. So the two girls sat down on the sand with Ephraim and told him the story of their meeting with the fairy.

"We slipped out of the caravan ever so quietly," Mary Louise began, "and we came down here to the sand. We sat down over there so that we could look down the lake and see how silvery and bright it was where the moon was shining on it, and—" here Mary Louise paused.

"And, would you believe it," she continued, "we suddenly heard the lap-lap-lap of a paddle, and before we could be frightened or look to see who it was, or anything, she was almost beside us. She was, really and truly."

Ephraim nodded his head and asked, "Then what?"

"She said," Jean took up the story, "She said 'Why, bless me, if it's not two little girls who should have been in their beds hours ago.'"

"'And I said,' Mary Louise interrupted, 'Are you a Wesalmacoon fairy?' and she said, 'There are many who call me that.'"

"Then we talked and talked. Of course, we were shy at first but she seemed so like a real person that we told her all about our caravan and Barbara and you and the boys. Oh! ever so many things we told her, and then she said she'd pull her boat in to shore and walk with us to the caravan."

"It was when she was leaving us," Mary Louise added, "that she whispered that she might come in the day-time to visit us."

"Well, well," Ephraim said, "Now I wouldn't be at

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all surprised if it were her boat we went fishing in this morning."

Ephraim had no time to enlarge on this nor the girls to ask any questions, for at that moment, Jack came running to them, and shouting, "Ephraim, Ephraim, Barbara's lost. We can't find her anywhere."

"What!" Ephraim exclaimed and got to his feet at once. "Barbara gone! Surely not."

CHAPTER XXI

THE SEARCH FOR BARBARA

THERE was no doubt about it, Barbara was gone. The caravaners followed Ephraim as he went to examine the place from which she had fled. But she had not fled; Ephraim knew that the moment he came to the tree to which he had tied her. She had been led away, for not only was Barbara gone, but so was her halter. Further proof that she had been led away rather than that she had run away, was in the fact that the bark of the tree showed no signs of her having struggled to free herself.

The caravaners looked very serious as they stood in a little group watching Ephraim examine the tree and the ground about. When he stooped down to look more closely at the ground they became excited, and when he started to crawl along the ground on his knees, they could not keep quiet any longer.

"Whatever are you doing, Ephraim?" Alec asked.

"You'd think he was trying to pick up a scent just as a dog does," Jack said in a whisper.

"Don't bother me," Ephraim commanded in a gruff voice.

After he had gone on his knees for a little way, he stood up and walked toward an entanglement of wild raspberry bushes.

"I say," he exclaimed, "Come here and look."

The caravaners hurried toward him.

"See," he said, "These bushes have been tramped down

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pretty badly. I think it was Barbara who tramped them down, and it's more than certain she didn't do it because she wanted to."

"Why?" all the caravaners asked at once.

"Because when a horse runs away he doesn't plunge into wild bushes and woods; he goes along a road or a trail, or out into a field."

"Do you think someone made Barbara go away?" Again all the caravaners spoke together.

"Yes, Barbara was stolen." Ephraim's voice was filled with anger.

"Barbara stolen!" The excitement of the caravaners changed; Mary Louise and Jean looked frightened; Jack like Ephraim, became angry; and Alec exclaimed, "Hurrah, then, let's be after the thief."

"Keep quiet," Ephraim commanded. "There's no need to shout about it, is there?"

"Well, I think you'd want to do something more than scratch your head," Alec flung back angrily, "and I tell you, I'm off now."

"Oh, no, you're not, young man," Ephraim caught Alec's arm. "You are going to stay here until we decide what to do."

Alec tried to shake off Ephraim's hand but he could not. He had to stand there while Ephraim thought and thought. Indeed, it seemed, not only to Alec, but to the other caravaners, as well, that Ephraim was as completely lost in thought as Barbara was lost to them.

At last Ephraim said, as if to himself, "That's what I'll do. I'll go along this trail that has been made in the bushes and I'll take Jack with me."

"What am I to do?" Alec asked.

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"You," Ephraim considered, "Well, if you were not such a hot-headed youngster I'd send you down along the road we came yesterday."

"All right, I'm off."

Ephraim's hand still held him, however, so Alec did not get away until he had been cautioned, "If you see Barbara, mind, don't you attempt to take her, but come back here as fast as you know how. Understand?"

Alec nodded and dashed off.

"Now," Ephraim turned to Jean and Mary Louise, "you go back to the caravan. You can go down to the sand, of course, but don't get into a boat, nor wade in the water, nor tell any fairies about Barbara being gone."

Jean and Mary Louise said "Yes" in small, disappointed voices and turned back to the caravan. They were to have no part in searching for Barbara and it made them feel very badly.

"I suppose it's because we're girls that they won't let us go with them," Mary Louise said.

"Yes, but, Maryloo, wouldn't it be fun if we should find Barbara, and maybe we shall," Jean whispered.

"How could we?" Mary Louise whispered back. "I don't see how we could."

Jean shook her head and looked thoughtful, as thoughtful as Ephraim had looked when he was deciding what to do.

Finally she said, "I think, perhaps, the fairy might help us, even though we're not to tell her."

It was in the hope of the fairy's return that Mary Louise and Jean went to the shore of the lake and sat in the same spot as they had been sitting in when the fairy had discovered them the night before.

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But she didn't come, and she didn't come, and she didn't come. Mary Louise and Jean were becoming very discouraged. They were becoming worried too, first about Barbara, and then about how they were ever to get home without Barbara to take them.

"We'll just have to lock up the caravan and walk," Jean said dolefully.

"Perhaps, sometimes Ephraim would take us on the handle-bars of his bicycle," Mary Louise suggested hopefully.

But Jean was not comforted by Mary Louise's suggestion. We'd have to carry food in bags on our backs," she continued, "and at night we'd have to crawl up in trees to sleep and more than likely we'd meet—"

Jean did not complete the picture of their possible trials, for at that moment they saw a girl walking toward them from the direction of the caravan. The moment she saw them she called out, "Hello, hello, caravaners. I've been to visit you and found that you weren't at home to receive guests."

Mary Louise looked at her and Jean looked at her but neither one of them could find words to return her greeting.

"You don't mean to tell me you've forgotten me so soon," the girl said as she came close to them.

Forgotten her! They had never seen her before. But—had they never seen her before? Could she be—the fairy? Could she?

"No, we've not forgotten you," Mary Louise spoke very slowly. "We remember you. You're the fairy and we're glad to see you." Mary Louise rose from her seat and bowed very low as she thought one should do in the presence of a fairy.

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"Good little girls," she laughed, "but I'm not a fairy in the day-time, you should know. I'm just a fairy at night."

She sat down beside them and began talking, first about the lake, then about swimming, then about fishing, and then about their caravan. But try as she would, she could not get Mary Louise and Jean to talk about anything, so disappointed were they to find that their fairy of the night before, was an ordinary girl after all. Indeed, they were quite provoked with her for not staying a fairy, but they were too polite to tell her so. Nor could they tell her that Barbara was lost, nor that they wanted to go swimming but could not, nor that they were worried about how they were going to get home. There was nothing they could tell her.

"You seem worried, to-day," the fairy who wasn't a fairy, said at last, "and I shouldn't be surprised if it's because your horse is gone away."

"Why how did you know?" Mary Louise asked eagerly.

"Oh, how I knew doesn't matter," she replied, "but it's a good thing I do know for, perhaps, I can help you to find her."

"Then, oh then, you must be a fairy after all," Mary Louise's voice sounded happy.

"Never in the day-time," the girl laughed, and as she laughed she rose from the sand and exclaimed, "We must not loiter here talking about fairies when we've a horse to find. Come along."

Mary Louise and Jean did not want to disobey Ephraim, but they did want to go with the girl. Jean looked at Mary Louise and whispered, "Shall we?" and Mary Louise nodded "Yes".

CHAPTER XXII

FINDING BARBARA

MARY LOUISE and Jean were eager and hopeful as they followed the girl who was not a fairy, along the shore of the lake. When she started down a path that led away from the lake and that seemed to lead to nothing but an entanglement of bramble bushes and saplings, their hopefulness changed to uncertainty. Still the girl led them on, letting them stop only occasionally to pick handfuls of raspberries. As they went, the path seemed to become rougher and rougher and the saplings to give place to full-sized trees.

"Will it be much farther?" Mary Louise asked at last.

"Surely you don't mean to say you're growing tired already," the girl laughed.

"Not tired, but I can't help thinking how angry Ephraim will be if he comes back and finds us gone." Mary Louise's voice sounded worried.

"Yes, but think how happy he'll be if you take your horse back with you," the girl returned.

"But are you sure that the horse you know about is Barbara?" Jean questioned.

"Is Barbara white?"

Mary Louise and Jean nodded their heads.

"Has she a brown star on her forehead?"

Again Mary Louise and Jean nodded.

"Then I think the horse I'm taking you to see is Barbara, never fear."

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While they were talking they came to a turn in the path and it led them, instead of farther into the bush, to the shore of the lake.

"Why, I thought we were miles and miles from the lake," Mary Louise exclaimed.

"And it's more than likely you thought you were lost, and that I was a wicked fairy and ever so many things," the girl said.

Mary Louise and Jean laughed but they could not help blushing for that was exactly what they were thinking.

"I had a reason for going the way we did," the girl said mysteriously.

Jean and Mary Louise did not have a chance to ask why for she pointed to a house that was far up a hill and said "That's where I live, see, over there, and if you think I'm a fairy you may now behold a fairy's palace."

The house did not look like a fairy palace, at least not as Jean and Mary Louise thought a fairy palace should look. It was painted yellow, not white as a fairy palace would be, and it had a verandah railing made, not of gleaming silver but of unpeeled saplings.

"Perhaps it changes as you do, at night," Mary Louise suggested.

"I'll invite you to come one night and see," the girl replied.

"Are we going to your house?" Jean asked anxiously.

"Not right away but, see, my mother is out on the verandah." The girl waved and called, "I'll come in a little while."

She led them along the shore for a short distance and then, again, they started along a path that led apparently to the cottage.

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"Now give me your hands," the girl commanded, "for I'm going to take you in here and I don't want you to get frightened and run away."

Did her voice sound gruff? Mary Louise and Jean thought it did but there was nothing to do but plunge into a thicket of bushes. The bushes were prickly for they were wild blackberry bushes. After the bushes they entered a clump of trees and there, would you believe it, there was Barbara.

Barbara tied to a tree and switching her tail to keep the black flies away from herself!

Mary Louise and Jean were so astonished they could do nothing but gasp.

"There's no need to ask if it's Barbara, is there?" the girl said.

"It's Barbara, yes, indeed it is," and Mary Louise went over to her and reached up to pat her warm nose. Barbara pricked up her ears and waved her tail a little; it was the only way she had of showing she knew them.

"You're not a wicked fairy but a very, very good one," Jean said a little shamefacedly to the girl.

"Shall we untie Barbara and take her over to the house," the girl asked and as she spoke she began to untie the peculiar knot in Barbara's halter.

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As they approached the cottage a man came toward them and as they came within earshot he shouted, "I say, Eleanor, you haven't turned horse thief, have you?"

"Why don't you ask me if I'm a kidnapper, too?" the girl asked.

"Because I suppose these are the young ladies about

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whom you were telling me." The man was now beside them, and as he spoke he took Barbara's halter.

The girl whose name Mary Louise and Jean had found out, was Eleanor, introduced them to the man, who was her father and she added to the introduction "this is their horse, Barbara, who was lost."

"Lost," the man exclaimed. "It's more than likely she was stolen, but how did you come to find her?"

"It's a long, long story and I don't think I'll tell it until after we've had lunch and Barbara herself has had a meal."

Mary Louise and Jean did not like to see Barbara led away to the little stable, so afraid were they that she would disappear again. They were anxious, too, to lose no time in getting back to the caravan, but before they could say anything, the girl's mother came to the verandah and called "Come, Eleanor, I have lunch ready and I'm waiting to meet Jean and Mary Louise."

"How does your mother know our names?" Mary Louise and Jean asked.

"Perhaps, it's because she's a fairy."

"Indeed, I'm not and you must not believe Eleanor when she tries to make you believe she's one," her mother said as she came toward them.

"I knew about you," she continued, "because Eleanor told me about finding you last night and she told me your names were Jean and Mary Louise. Now you tell me which is which."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE RETURN OF BARBARA

THE story of how Eleanor Irving was able to find Barbara was a long one and it was not all told until she and her father, Mary Louise and Jean and Barbara were on their way to the caravan. They did not go through the woods and along the lakeshore as they had in the morning, but went out on the road along which Barbara had drawn the caravan and the caravaners the day before. They went that way because Mr. Irving said Barbara could not walk through the sand of the lake shore. She was too heavy for it, he explained, and moreover, she was too big and awkward to make her way along the narrow paths.

"But how did she get here, do you think," Mary Louise asked.

"She must have come by the road," Mr. Irving said, "but why she came or when, you'll have to ask Eleanor."

So Eleanor launched into the story and the first words she said made Mary Louise's and Jean's eyes grow big with fear, wonder, and eagerness.

"The gypsies brought her here, of course," Eleanor said.

"I've no doubt about that," Mr. Irving added, "and I've no doubt they had trouble in bringing her, too. She looks a pretty spunky horse."

"Gypsies! Are there gypsies here? Where?" Mary Louise and Jean asked.

"There are gypsies across the lake from where your

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caravan is," Mr. Irving explained, "and last night after they saw the smoke from your supper fire, they no doubt, came across to visit you. When they found you asleep, they decided to take your horse. A gypsy can never resist a good horse, you know."

"And because they knew you'd be searching everywhere for her to-day," Eleanor took up the explanation, "and that the moment you heard of a gypsy encampment you would go to it, they hid her in the woods. To-night they mean to come for her and by to-morrow morning to have her painted to look like a different horse!

Jean and Mary Louise had never heard of horses being painted. For a moment they thought Eleanor was teasing them but she continued, "Gypsies, you know, are famous for painting their horses. They put great brown blotches all over them and then tell people that the horse is a prancing broncho from the West."

"That's quite true," Mr. Irving said, "but I think Mary Louise and Jean are more anxious to know how you came to discover Barbara."

"Well, last night when Mary Louise and Jean thought I was a fairy, they told me all about the caravan and Ephraim and Jack and Alec and Barbara. That's how I knew Barbara was white and had a brown star on her forehead. Then this morning when I led Prince, our horse, to water, he began to neigh and pull on his halter anxiously. He pulled so desperately I thought he would get away and he neighed so pitifully that it sounded almost like crying. Just as I was getting him calmed down a little, I thought I heard a horse returning his call. He thought so, too, and he put up a terrible fight against going back to his stall."

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"And then what?" Mr. Irving asked as Eleanor paused.

"I forgot about it until I saw Jean and Mary Louise looking so unhappy." Eleanor concluded her story and as she did so they came to the hill above the lake.

No one spoke as they went down the hill and along the road that led to the caravan.

"Where was Barbara?" Mr. Irving whispered.

"Over there," Jean pointed and Mr. Irving led Barbara to the tree and tied her as Ephraim had tied her the night before.

"There doesn't seem to be anyone about," he said in a low voice, "so let's go and sit down on the sand."

"And when they come back we'll pretend we don't know a thing about Barbara," Jean planned.

"That's the idea," Mr. Irving returned.

But Mary Louise and Jean were too excited to sit down. They wanted to show Eleanor and her father the inside of the caravan and they wanted to look for Ephraim and Jack and Alec. Nor did they have to look either long or far, for no sooner were they inside the caravan than someone was at the door calling out "Hello, who is here, I say?"

It was Ephraim. He looked tired and angry and worried.

"Have you found Barbara?" Jean asked in an excited voice.

"No." Ephraim was looking hard at Mr. Irving and considering him, so Mr. Irving thought, as a likely thief.

"What's this I hear about your horse having run away," he asked.

"Just that she has not run away," Ephraim said emphatically, "but that she has been stolen."

"You don't tell me," Mr. Irving was very sympathetic

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but his sympathy was wasted on Ephraim who, if it was possible, looked angrier than ever.

"Ephraim, I say, Ephraim, come here." The voice belonged to Alec and before he had finished shouting Jack's voice was added to his in an urgent call of "Hurry, Ephraim, hurry. See who is here."

Ephraim went and as he went he could not understand why gales of hearty laughter followed him from the caravan.

The boys had discovered Barbara tied as she had been the night before, and as they stared at her and shouted their happiness and relief, Ephraim could do nothing but stare.

How he stared! He could not have stared in greater amazement had he suddenly been confronted by a great throng of fairies or of Indian braves, or of fairies and Indian braves each one with a horse the image of Barbara.

CHAPTER XXIV

ONE MORE SURPRISE

THE loss of Barbara and the return of Barbara were not the only surprises of the day. The next surprise came late in the afternoon, after Eleanor and her father had gone home and after the caravaners had had their first swim in the lake; at least it was the first swim for Jean and Mary Louise.

What a swim it was! At first Mary Louise shivered and stood firmly on the sandy bottom, refusing even to try "ducking". Then she did and Jean did; everyone did and they went gurgling, laughing and splashing all the way to the diving-board.

"Who is going to be the first to dive?" It was Alec who shouted the query and in the same breath he answered it.

But he was too late to be first for before he could scramble from the water Ephraim was leaping from the board. A great sweeping leap it was that Ephraim took, with arms outstretched and legs out straight and rigid behind him; a leap that made him look like a bird swooping for his prey. And his prey was Mary Louise, for instead of plunging into the water, he seemed only to touch it and as he did so he caught Mary Louise in one arm and swam away with her.

"That's how a hawk catches a chicken," he said as he brought her back to the diving-board.

"Now do it to me, Ephraim," Jean cried out eagerly. So Ephraim went out to the end of the diving-board again,

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took another leap and this time as he swooped down, he caught Jean and went lunging through the water with her. It is more than likely that he would have had requests to play "hawk and chicken" with Jack and Alec, too, if he had not announced as he returned with Jean to the diving-board, that he was ready for a race to the shore.

After the race no one could tell who had won it. It seemed as if they were all, all five of them scrambling from the water at the same time.

"What do you think of swimming in Wesalmiacoon?" Ephraim asked Mary Louise as she lay laughing and sunning herself on the sand.

"I think it's the wonderful-est, wonderful-est thing in the world," she replied emphatically, "and I want to go in again in a few minutes to have a swim for my daddy."

Ephraim shook his head to show that he would not allow it and before Mary Louise could remonstrate with him a clear shrill sound as of an automobile horn, ripped through the quiet air. The caravaners sat up and listened. The horn sounded again, and immediately after, they could hear what seemed, for all the world, like the chugging of a motor as it climbed a hill.

"I say," Alec exclaimed as he stood up and started in the direction of the noise, "it might be Robin Hood blowing his horn."

"I hope it's not gypsies come to hunt for Barbara," Mary Louise whispered to Ephraim.

"I should think not," Jean said scornfully. "They'd hardly announce themselves, would they?"

Another blast from the horn, a loud, gusty one, and after it a voice calling out, "Hello, young man, will you tell me where I can find The Blue Fly Caravan?"



He caught Jean and went lunging through the water with her.

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The voice, the question or the shout from Alec, one or other or all of them, brought the other caravaners to their feet and sent them dashing in the direction from which the shouts had come.

In a moment they were shouting too, shouting only one word—"Grandfather!" The next moment they added two more words—"Mrs. Grumble".

It was no wonder they shouted and no wonder they shouted "Grandfather and Mrs. Grumble" for, before they reached the caravan, Mr. Simmonds and Mrs. Grumble were there. From shouting, everyone, even Mrs. Grumble, went to laughing and from laughing the caravaners went to asking questions. They did not seem to mind their questions not being answered for they continued asking them and when they could not think of new questions, they repeated ones they had asked before.

It was like a magpies' party, Mrs. Grumble said, and although none of the caravaners knew what a magpie is, they laughed all the same. While they were laughing Mr. Simmonds had a chance to speak.

"Let me get a look at you," he said, "I want to see if you've turned Indian or gypsy. There's Maryloo and I must say she's brown enough to be either one. You all are, for that matter, and I think it is a good thing we came when we did. If we had waited a few days longer you would have been browned beyond recognition. Don't you think so, Mrs. Grumble?"

Mrs. Grumble nodded her head and at the same time she sat down on the top step of the caravan.

"But you didn't come just to see if you'd know us, did you?" Alec asked.

"Hardly that, my boy," Mr. Simmonds returned, "but

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I've heard it's not polite to ask unexpected guests why they have come, or how long they're going to stay, until after you have given them at least one meal."

However it was not the caravaners who prepared the meal but Mrs. Grumble with the assistance of Ephraim who made the fire, and of Alec who carried baskets and parcels from Mr. Simmonds' car.

It was not until the meal was nearly over that Mr. Simmonds said, "Now is the time to be answering some of the questions you asked me when I came."

One question was all that was necessary, however, for when Alec asked "How long are you going to stay?" His grandfather said, "As long as it will take you to get ready to go home with me."

"Go home with you!" they all exclaimed at once, "Why! Why! Why!"

Mr. Simmonds looked over at Mrs. Grumble and they laughed.

"It seems that the suggestion does not meet with approval," Mr. Simmonds said.

"No, indeed," Mary Louise burst out. "It certainly does not. Why Mr. Simmonds, we've just arrived. We've had only one swim and I haven't caught one fish, not one."

"And I," said Alec, "I could not think of leaving until I have paid my respects. I think that's the right word, to the Wesalmacoon fairies."

"What! Fairies! Do you mean to tell me that you have not seen them yet?" Mr. Simmonds asked.

"Maryloo and Jean thought they had met a fairy princess," Alec said as he shook his head, "but she turned out to be an ordinary girl, not a fairy princess at all."

Jean and Captain Jack took no part in the discussion

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for they had an idea that Mr. Simmonds might be trying to tease them. Their faces had worried, puzzled expressions, however, and they cast hurried glances from Mrs. Grumble to Mr. Simmonds. They looked at Ephraim, too, to see if he might know anything of the plan, but he was as puzzled and surprised as they.

"We can't go, so there," Mary Louise said decidedly. "We just cannot because we've promised Eleanor to visit her and we're going to see the gypsies and we're going to the look-out tower that's over there, and I have to swim for my daddy yet."

"Shall we talk about it to-morrow?" Mr. Simmonds asked and he added to Mrs. Grumble, "It's apparent that we're not very popular at the moment."

The caravaners were very quiet and deep in thought. They had just begun their adventures. They had not been to the head of the lake. They had not been picking berries. They had not found a deserted lumber camp in the woods. There were so many things they had planned to do. Captain Jack spoke finally.

"I think you came just to see how we are getting on, Grandfather," he said, "and I think you have no intention of taking us home. You're just trying to tease us."

"Bully for the Captain," Alec shouted as he jumped to his feet. "Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Mary Louise added lusty shouts to Alec's and joined him in a wild dance.

"Am I right, Grandfather?" Captain Jack asked eagerly.

"Yes, you're right, my boy. We came just to see how you like caravanning," Mr. Simmonds replied. "Tell me, how would you like to go berry-picking with Mrs. Grumble to-morrow?"

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"Fine, yes, it would be ever so much fun," they replied but at once, they came back to the question of going home. They would not have to go to-morrow night or the next day? They would not, would they? And Mr. Simmonds laughingly assured them, that no caravaner would have to go home unless he wanted to.

CHAPTER XXV

OLD JIMMIE TIPPERARY

PERHAPS you have never gone along a narrow bush trail to a patch of raspberries. Perhaps you have never climbed over fallen logs and skirted ivied stumps until you have come to a tangle of mullins and raspberry bushes. Then you do not know the joy of lifting up a branch and finding it laden with dark, mellow berries. Then you do not know the pleasure of hearing the berries falling into your pail and of seeing the bottom and the sides gradually hidden by the luscious fruit. And you do not know the tantalizing fear of losing yourself in the tangle of berry bushes and tiny saplings.

Mary Louise knew nothing of berry picking. She had never had the fun of filling a berry pail nor the responsibility of seeing that she did not get lost in the woods. In the morning when they started off along the trail she was as eager to pick berries as Mrs. Grumble was anxious to have them for jam. She scorned a mug for picking into and demanded that she be given a fair sized pail. She was equally scornful of Mrs. Grumble's instructions that she stay close to her.

"I'm not likely to get lost," she said proudly, "not now that I'm used to living in the woods."

"Oh, really!" Alec exclaimed. "Well I wouldn't be so sure about it."

A little later, however, both Mary Louise and Alec lost themselves. How they did it they could not tell,

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neither could they tell when they did it. One moment they were picking berries near Mrs. Grumble; the next, or so it seemed to them, they could not see Mrs. Grumble. A few minutes later they could not get any reply to their shouts.

They were lost! It was amazing how quickly Mary Louise became alarmed. She thought of bears and gypsies and dragons that lived in forest caves. She thought of the fun she had been going to have carrying a heaping pail of berries back to the caravan. And now they were lost! They were! She had no idea of the direction from which they had come and they could not make anyone hear them.

"It seems that you're to be the maid of the greenwood," Alec said laughingly.

"What do you mean?" Mary Louise questioned anxiously.

"Oh! just that you'll likely have to live in the woods for days and days, maybe all your life." Alec certainly was not comforting.

"But Alec, you could find your way back, couldn't you?"

"I'm not so sure about it," Alec said slowly. "That may be west and it may be east, perhaps that is south but I have no idea where north is."

Alec was irritating and teasing. Mary Louise bit her lips hard to keep back a choking sob and went on picking berries.

She called once more, and Alec followed her with a lusty yell, but the only reply to their shouts was the echo.

"Perhaps we'll find a camp in the woods," Alec said hopefully, "and we can live there. I can hunt woodchuck for stew and break down limbs of trees for firewood. It won't be dreadful. I'm not at all alarmed."

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"Oh, but Alec think how sad it would be," Mary Louise's voice shook. "Just think, always living in the woods and never, never seeing anyone."

Alec laughed, or rather chuckled, but as the day wore into the heat of mid-afternoon, and he became very hungry, Alec's fears were equal to those of Mary Louise. He put his pail of berries down at the foot of a tree and began tramping about desperately. He started down one trail only to find that it led deeper into a new growth of forest. He started down another only to find that it led to a swamp and still another took him to a marsh of wild hay.

It was Mary Louise who discovered a camp. She came upon it so suddenly and unexpectedly that for a few seconds she did nothing but stare at it. It was very low, built into the side of a hill and the logs that made its front and sides were covered over with moss.

"Alec, come quickly. Come! Come!" she called frantically for with sudden fear she became certain that an ogre would come thundering from the door. Even as she shouted, the door opened.

It was not flung open but opened very slowly and gently. By the time Alec came along the trail a tiny old man was standing in the doorway, blinking his eyes at them and speaking in a quavering voice.

"Well, my young friends," he said, "what are you doing in my door-yard? You must be lost surely or else you're gypsies."

Mary Louise and Alec were both too astonished to speak, Mary Louise because she was frightened and Alec because he had never seen so tiny a man in his life before and certainly he had never seen anyone so peculiarly dressed. The man had on bright green trousers and a vivid red shirt.



"I am old Jimmie Tipperary."

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Indeed as he came from his doorway and walked toward them he looked a little like an animated Christmas tree.

"He's coming after us," Mary Louise whispered and slipped her hand into Alec's, "and he'll cast a spell over us."

"Who are you? Tell me quickly," the little man demanded as he came up to them.

"I'm Mary Louise Graham," Mary Louise said as bravely as she could.

"And I'm Alexander Simmonds," Alec said. "We're lost. We would be very much obliged if you'd tell us how to get to the shore of Wesalmacoon Lake."

"You're campers, aye," the old man cackled. Well, I'll tell you who I am and then maybe you'll know whether I'm likely to tell you or not. "I am," he straightened himself to his full height which was not much more than five feet, "I am old Jimmie Tipperary. Now then, do you think I'm likely to tell you, eh?"

Mary Louise cast a hurried glance at Alec and she was worried to see that he was perplexed.

"If you would be so kind, Mr. Tipperary," she said as sweetly as she could. "We would be very," she paused for a word and finally added "grateful".

"Mr. Tipperary!" the man burst into a rippling laugh. "Mr. Tipperary! That's the first time I've ever been called that."

"Mary Louise is right," Alec said. "We would be deeply grateful and so would grandfather, too."

"But I tell you, young man, I'm old Jimmie Tipperary," the man repeated almost angrily, "and do you think old Jimmie Tipperary is likely to give directions to campers. And that's what you are—nothing but campers and I say, I say the devil take campers."

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"But, but, Mr. Tipperary, please." Mary Louise was tearful.

"Ah, ah, the youngster still calls me Mr. Tipperary." The little man slapped his thighs gleefully.

"I think we shall be able to find our way back very well, thank you," Alec said with great dignity and as he spoke he took Mary Louise's hand and started to lead her down a trail.

They had gone only a few yards when the man called out in an angry voice, "Come back here at once. At once, I say. People don't ride their high horses in front of Jimmie Tipperary."

Alec and Mary Louise came back and stood in front of the old man. When he saw that they were frightened he said angrily, "I hate campers and more than any other people, I hate campers that come nosing and sneaking around Wesalmacoon Lake."

"But we're not campers, Mr. Tipperary," Mary Louise said eagerly. "We're caravanners."

"Mr. Tipperary again!" the old man did not laugh this time and he continued, "I'm old Jimmie Tipperary, I tell you, but I'm not Mr. Tipperary. It seems, though, that you've never heard of me, so I'll tell you who I am. I'm the first white man who ever came to this lake to live. Wesalmacoon Lake is mine. When I came here I had another name than Tipperary, but I came from Tipperary in Ireland so I just called myself that. See."

"It's very interesting, I'm sure." Again it was Mary Louise who spoke.

"And listen," the old man came closer to them, "I've told you I hate campers, and I don't know yet what I think about caravanners. I never heard of them before, but, tell

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me, have you anything to do with that blue omnibus I saw last night?"

"That's our caravan," Alec told him. "If you'll tell us where it is from here, we'll go at once and not bother you any more."

"I'll not tell you. So there!" the old man sounded as peevish as a fretful child. "You may as well content yourselves to come into my cabin. I think I'd like to have caravaners for visitors." He threw the door open as wide as possible as he spoke and motioned for them to enter.

Mary Louise held Alec's hand and begged him not to go. "He's a dragon, a little weeny dragon. I've read tales about them," she whispered, "and the instant he gets us in there he'll cast a spell over us."

"Come," Old Jimmie Tipperary commanded in a loud voice.

And they went. Frightened and fearful though they were, they went, Alec leading and Mary Louise following very slowly and reluctantly.

They had seen a mill camp and an Indian princess' cabin but they, neither one of them, had seen anything at all like the dark cabin of old Jimmie Tipperary. It was as queer as he was himself. It was gloomy and yet not gloomy, for it had a long table that was as red as old Jimmie's shirt and it had three chairs that were as green as his trousers. There was a row of fiddles along one end of the cabin, and four bird cages, all apparently empty, were hung above the rusty stove. On a shelf above the table there was an array of painted dolls, yellow, green, blue, orange, pink; they seemed to be of every colour and of a great variety of sizes.

"That's my family," the old man laughed. "I'll intro-

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duce you to them by name later. After you've gone if you do go, I expect I'll call one of them Mary Louise."

"We really must go now," Mary Louise began.

"Sit down," old Jimmie commanded them and they sat down, each on a green chair. No sooner had they done so than the strange man shut the door and bolted it.

"Now I'll give you something to eat," he said hospitably. "What would you like? Roast or hash? Fish or venison? Pie or fruit? Bread or cake? Deer's milk or maple wine?"

All the time he was talking he was busy taking dishes from the shelves of his long cupboard. He carried them to the table, took the covers off and by the time he had finished announcing his menu he had an imposing display of food.

Again he issued a command. This time it was to eat, and they ate, first cold venison and bread and then wild raspberries and corn cake and they drank milk which might have been deer's milk.

"Now then," old Jimmie broke the silence, "I'll tell you what I do here, and why I live here. I'm a trapper. Campers don't know what trappers are and not likely caravaners do either, so I'll tell you. I catch fox and raccoons, mink and muskrats in traps and might even try catching boy and girl caravaners." His laugh, this time was really quite friendly.

It is difficult to know how long old Jimmie might have kept them sitting in his cabin for just as he was pulling some of his small traps out of his cupboard, there was a heavy knocking at the door.

"Come in, Ephraim. I've been expectng you," old Jimmie, to the astonishment of Mary Louise and Alec, called out in a friendly voice.

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The door was flung open and Ephraim walked in or rather stumbled in for the cabin was dark and he could not see.

"I've not come to visit you, Tipperary," he began and then he spied Mary Louise and Alec. "Why, here are the stray-aways. You didn't steal them, Tip, did you?"

CHAPTER XXVI

'TALL TREES' ONCE MORE

It was dark or nearly so before Ephraim and Alec and Mary Louise reached the caravan. Mary Louise was tired and sleepy and she was homesick. She wanted her father. She wanted her mother. She wanted her big brother Dick and she wanted Great-Aunt Maria. She did; she wanted Great-Aunt Maria very, very badly.

Perhaps it was because she was so homesick that she was not at all anxious to talk about their adventures in the woods. She was not the least excited either, when Jean said, "Oh, Maryloo, we've been to visit the gypsies. They have the darlinest, weeniest baby you ever saw."

She did not even listen to Jack's account of how he had gone to the look-out tower to see if the ranger there could sight them. She just sat all curled up on a cushion in the caravan and thought and thought and thought. And the only thing she thought was, "I want to go home. I want Great-Aunt Maria."

She was thinking it so hard she did not hear her name being called outside.

"Maryloo! Maryloo!" the voice called. But Mary Louise sat on her cushion too deep in thought to hear anything.

Then at last close beside her the voice said softly, "Maryloo, child, you're not asleep surely."

"N-n-o," Mary Louise answered, "but, oh dear, dear,

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dear Mrs. Grumble please take me home to Great-Aunt Maria. Please do."

Mary Louise did not know how it happened, indeed when she remembered it next day, she did not see how it could have happened. But it did. Mrs. Grumble sat down on the floor of the caravan and took Mary Louise in her arms and Mary Louise cried and cried and cried.

"There now, my baby," she comforted her (and Mary Louise did not mind being called a baby), "there now, my little love, there now. You'll go home to-morrow, never fear."

To-morrow! At the moment to-morrow seemed as far away as Christmas to Mary Louise. She did not want to wait until to-morrow. She wanted to go at once, quickly, in a car that would race down all the hills and fly up all the hills. Nevertheless there was comfort in being held in Mrs. Grumble's strong arms and her bosom was as warm and soft as a down cushion. It is no wonder, then, that she went sound asleep.

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"What's this, I hear," Mr. Simmonds said to Mary Louise when she came down to the water's edge next morning. "You've been making friends with Jimmie Tipperary, they tell me."

It was caravaner Mary Louise Graham who answered him, not the tired, homesick girl of the night before.

"Yes, and he was the funniest little man," she said. "He has dolls and dolls, pink ones, and blue ones and red ones and green ones, and he's going to name one of them Mary Louise."

"And what's this I've heard," Captain Jack called out

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from the lake where he was swimming. "Is it true that someone I know is going home to-day?"

Mary Louise did not answer at once. She was not so tired this morning and not so homesick. But still—yes, she did want to see Great-Aunt Maria and she did want to be back at 'Tall Trees'.

So she called to Jack, "Yes, I'm going home to-day. Are you?"

"No, indeed, I'm not," Captain Jack answered scornfully. "Do you think I'd let a queer little Irishman and a pack of gypsies frighten me?"

Jack took a dive and swam away in a great hurry.

"What? What? What did you say, Mary Louise?"

Jean and Alec came running down to the lake but before Mary Louise could answer their questions, Mrs. Grumble called them to breakfast.

After breakfast the caravaners held a meeting. They talked and talked, at least Jean and Alec talked and Mary Louise listened and Captain Jack looked bored. They might have gone on talking for an hour if Mr. Simmonds had not, at last, taken part in the conversation.

"I'm glad someone has decided to go home with Mrs. Grumble and me," he said, "for I think poor Barbara could not manage the hills again with such a load."

"Perhaps I'd better go, too, then," Jean said doubtfully, "especially when you're going, Mary Louise."

After another little while, when parcels were being stowed into the trunk of the car, Alec said slowly, "Well, I'll go, too and give old Barb an easy pull going home."

So they went, Alec and Jean and Mary Louise, crowded into the back seat of Mr. Simmonds' car. They were as happy and eager to be on the way home as they had been

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nearly a week before, to be on the road headed for Wesal-macoon. They liked being caravaners, but there was no fun quite so good as going home again.

They may have been a very little bit sorry they were going when they said good-bye to Captain Jack and Ephraim and Barbara but they were not at all sorry when the car was hurrying over the twisty roads.

"Please may we stop at the princess' house?" Mary Louise begged. "I want to buy a basket for my Great-Aunt Maria."

Mrs. Grumble smiled as she nodded her head and said "I think we may stop and perhaps at the camp, too. It's more than likely that Mrs. McGoey will be expecting us for dinner."

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Yes, indeed, caravaning was great fun, but Mary Louise Graham was the happiest little girl in the world when she went bounding over the lawn of 'Tall Trees' and called to Great-Aunt Maria, 'I'm back, Auntie. I'm back, and oh, I'm so glad to see you.'

It took her days and days to tell Great-Aunt Maria about their adventures. First she told her the story of the Camden fairies and she was very happy when Great-Aunt Maria said, "I know about the fairies of Camden Hill. When I was a little girl no bigger than you we went to the hill to look for them, but alas, they hid away and would not come near."

Next she told her about meeting Indian Annie and Great-Aunt Maria laughed heartily when she described the visit of Annie and her husband to the camp. "Dear me," she said, "I knew Annie's father and mother. They used

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to pitch their tent down yonder in the garden in the spring when they were on their way north."

Great-Aunt Maria even knew Jimmie Tipperary and she said she was glad that Mary Louise had met him. "He's queer, no doubt," she said, "but he's ever so kind. Long, long ago, when he first came to this country, he used to work at 'Tall Trees'."

Before Mary Louise had finished telling Great-Aunt Maria of their caravanning adventures, she had decided that she wanted to stay at 'Tall Trees' for a long, long time. Great-Aunt Maria wasn't an old, old lady who didn't know anything about little girls. No, of course, she was not. She had been to Camden Hill; she knew not only Indian Annie but her father and mother, too, and she liked queer, kind, funny Jimmie Tipperary.

"My, I am glad daddy and mother sent me to you, Auntie," Mary Louise said gleefully.

"I'm very glad, too, my dear," Miss Maria said softly.

"You know so many stories and when you were a little girl you had adventures, too, didn't you?"

Miss Maria smiled, "not very many adventures, Mary Louise, but I had ever so much fun, here, at 'Tall Trees' and I hope you will, too."

"Indeed, I shall," Mary Louise said emphatically, "and we'll have some adventures together."

"Perhaps," Miss Maria smiled again and kissed Mary Louise.

And they did, and they had some very, very good times. They had a garden party on the lawn at 'Tall Trees' and they had a party in the big drawing-room and with Jean and Jack and Alec, who called themselves "The Blue Fly Caravan Club," they went on expeditions up and down the

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river. But the best times of all, for Mary Louise, came on the evenings when Great-Aunt Maria sat in her easy chair and she sat on the little stool, and her aunt talked of the days when she was a little girl. Funny, happy, exciting days they seemed to Mary Louise and she clapped her hands many times and said "Oh, dear Aunt Maria, I do love being here at 'Tall Trees' with you."





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The blue fly caravan

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